

A
R E V I E W

5 OF THE
NARRATIVE and STATE of the Proceedings of the Judicatories against Mr. *Ebenezer Erskine* Minister at *Stirling*, Mr. *William Wilson* Minister at *Perth*, Mr. *Alexander Moncrieff* Minister at *Abernethy*, and Mr. *James Fisher* Minister at *Kinclaven*; Emitted by a Committee of the Commission of the General Assembly.

W H E R E I N

The Reasonings of the said *Narrative* are examined, and the Representation that is made of the Proceedings of the Judicatories enquired into.

Published by the foresaid Ministers, for their just and necessary Vindication.

Prov. xviii. 17. *He that is first in his own Cause, seemeth just; but his Neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*

Acts iv. 19. *Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.*

Isaiah lxvi. 5. *Your Brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.*

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A REVIEW of the Narrative, &c.



THE Commission of the General Assembly having, at their Meeting in *November* last, pass'd their final Sentence against Mr. *Ebenezer Erskine* Minister at *Stirling*, Mr. *William Wilson* Minister at *Perth*, Mr. *Alexander Moncrieff* Minister at *Abernethy* and Mr. *James Fisher* Minister at *Kinclaven*, loos'ing their Pastoral Relations to their respective Parishes, and declaring them no longer Ministers of this Church, &c. They did appoint a Committee to take all proper Materials, and to make up a *Narrative* or *State* of the Proceedings of the Judicatories in this Affair, to be published for the Satisfaction of all concerned : In Consequence of this Appointment, the Committee did, sometime after the Meeting of the Reverend Commission, publish their *Narrative*, wherein they alledge the Proceedings of the Church are fairly stated, and fully vindicated from the Aspersions cast upon them by the foresaid Ministers and their Adherents.

If virulent Reflections, and bitter Sarcasms upon the Character and Conduct of the *Protesting Brethren*, are proper Materials for a Narrative of this Nature; then the Committee's Performance is in so far a compleat Piece of its Kind. It is justly reckoned an Evidence of a bad Cause, and of a very lame Performance, when Wrath, Passion

and

and Inveſtive are intermixed with Argument. We are perſwaded that Truth needs no ſuch Materials for its Support, and *that the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*; and therefore we ſhall not render them *Railing for Railing, nor Reviling for Reviling*: Yet, in the mean Time, the Juſtice we owe to the Cauſe in which we are engaged, and which we doubt not to affirm is the Cauſe of Truth, as we hope ſhall be made appear, will oblige us to expoſe their wrong Reasonings, and to ſet their unfair Representations of Matters of Fact, in a juſt Light, that the World may not be impoſed upon by this Performance, altho' it comes abroad as a Deed of a *Committee* of the Commiſſion of the General Aſſembly.

The true *State of the Proceſs* published ſome Time ago, together with our *Representations* given in to the Meeting of the Commiſſion in *Auguſt* laſt, which contain our Reasons for proteſting againſt the Deciſion of the Aſſembly in the Caſe of Mr. *Erſkine*, as alſo for reſuſing to retract the ſame, have ſatiſfied, we hope, ſuch as are unprejudiced as to the chief Points in Controverſy betwixt the preſent Managers and us: And, ſince the *Narrative-writers* have made no Anſwer unto the Reasons advanced, for our Conduct in our ſoreſaid *Representations* (tho' they have thought fit to enter into the Reasoning with us) we muſt refer the Reader unto them, and we ſhall tranſcribe no more of what is already published than is neceſſary to vindicate our Conduct from the unjuſt *Aſperſions* the *Narrative* throws upon it.

The Reverend Committee are pleaſed to inform the World in their Preface, that “ Neither the
“ *Commiffion* nor any other Judicatories are an-
“ ſwe-

“ fwerable for their Reasonings,” that are all along intermixed with the *Narrative*. But, if a bare Narrative of Matters of Fact was fufficient to vindicate the Proceedings of the Judicatories of the Church, why did the Committee trouble either themfelves or the World with their Reasonings on the Subject? And, in this Cafe, the moft unexceptionable Narrative they could have publifhed, would have been an authentick Extract of the Proceedings of the feveral Judicatories in this Affair, leaving the Reader to judge for himfelf: And, if they thought the Reasonings that they have intermixed were neceffary in order to account for the Steps the Judicatories have taken, why do they charge the Facts upon the Affembly and Commiffion, and yet free them of the Reasons which they advance in the *Narrative* to fupport thefe Deeds? Was the Conduct of the Commiffion fuch a Myftery, that their Committee cannot adventure to tell what were the Reasons that moved them to act the Part they did? It is well known, the four protefting Brethren were condemned by the Affembly without ever being allowed to make their Defences: And, as the Commiffion did not give them a full Hearing, in regard one of their Representations was never read; So ’tis manifelt from the Commiffion’s Procedure, that they were refolv’d no Regard fhould be had to their Defences, however ftrong and convincing; but at any Rate, in Obedience to the laft Affembly, to execute their Sentence againft them. It might have been expected that fuch fingular and fummur Procedure fhould have been fupported by Reasons and Grounds fo plain and evident in themfelves, that the Committee of the Commiffion fhould have no more to do but to lay them plainly

plainly before the World; and that they should have been able to lay, *These are the Assembly's or the Commission's Reasons for the several Steps of their Procedure against the four protesting Ministers*: But the several Sentences past against the laid protesting Ministers having no Manner of Foundation in our Form of Process, or in the Acts and Constitutions of this Church (as will appear from the Sequel) it seems the leading Men are not at one among themselves about the Reasons that are needful to support their Procedure, and therefore the Committee have not adventured to lay their Reasonings in the *Narrative* at the Door of the Commission.

The Act and Sentence of the last Assembly, approving the Proceedings of the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* against Mr. *Erskine*, and appointing him to be rebuked and admonished at their own Bar, was the immediate Occasion of the Protestation which was so much resented by the Assembly: And therefore we shall in the first Place consider how the *Narrative* represents the foresaid Act and Sentence of the Assembly, approving the Proceedings of the Synod, as also the Arguments that are brought for the Justice of the said Sentence; and then we shall review the Reasons that are advanced for our Submission to the Sentence of Rebuke and Admonition past against Mr. *Erskine*, and to the Sentence of Suspension execute against us, because of our refusing to retract our Protestation: And under these several Heads we shall also consider the Account the *Narrative* gives of the Conduct of the Judicatories towards the protesting Brethren, and of their Behaviour towards them.

As to the Act and Sentence of the Assembly,
appro-

approving the Proceedings of the Synod, the Account that the *Narrative* gives of it is as follows, *Page* 14. "After all, the Assembly came to a Sentence, whereby they found these Expressions vented by Mr. *Erskine*, and contained in the Minutes of the foresaid Synod's Proceedings, with the Answers thereto made by him, to be offensive, and to tend to disturb the Peace and good Order of the Church: Therefore they approv'd the Proceedings of the Synod, and appointed him to be rebuked and admonished by the Moderator at their own Bar, in order to terminate the Process; which was done accordingly."

This is far from being a fair *Narrative* of the Assembly's Sentence, when near the one Half thereof is omitted: For the Reverend Committee were abundantly sensible that they were scarce capable to vindicate the Assembly before the Protestant World, in proceeding to inflict their Censures for no other Crime but calling in question a Law which they themselves own to be merely human; and therefore they thought fit to quote no more of this Act than served their Purpose, and yet that Part which they have omitted contains the Assembly's Judgment upon the Process as it was finished by the Synod of *Pertb* and *Stirling*, and casts a considerable Light upon the Sentence appointing Mr. *Erskine* to be rebuked, and also discovers unto us the Unreasonableness of what seems to be alledged by the Committee afterwards in their *Narrative*, viz. That the Manner of Mr. *Erskine's* expressing himself was condemned, but not the Matter delivered by him, *Pages* 11th and 18th. And therefore, since the Committee have not thought fit to insert the Act and Sentence at large

large, whereby Mr. *Erskine* was condemned, it is needful that we do it in this Place, and it is as follows.

Edinbr. May 15, 1733.

THE General Assembly having, at a former Diet, considered an Appeal entred by Mr. Ebenezer *Erskine* Minister at Stirling from a Sentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, wherein the said Synod had found Ground to censure him, and appointed him to be rebuked, on Account of several indecent Expressions uttered by him in a Sermon preached before the said Synod in October last, tending to disquiet the Peace of this Church, and impugning several Acts of Assembly, and Proceedings of the Church judicatories, and had appointed him to be admonished to behave orderly for the future. — The Assembly found these Expressions vented by Mr. *Erskine*, and contained in the Minutes of the foresaid Synod's Proceedings, with the Answers thereto made by him, to be offensive, and to tend to disturb the Peace and good Order of this Church; therefore they approved the Proceedings of the Synod, and appointed him to be rebuked and admonished by the Moderator at their own Bar, in order to terminate the Process; which was done accordingly.

The Reader will easily observe, That the Committee have entirely overleaped the first Part of this Act, no doubt to make the World believe what they alledge, Page 18th, That first the Synod, and then the General Assembly, “ Or-
“ dained Mr. *Erskine* to be rebuked (only) for
“ offensive Expressions tending to disturb the
“ Peace

" Peace and good Order of this Church, and
 " that their Censure was not inflicted for any
 " Heterodoxy in Doctrine." Yet it is evident, that
 the foresaid Act and Sentence bears in the most
 exprefs Terms, That the Assembly approved the
 Proceedings of the Synod of *Perth and Stirling*,
 finding Ground to censure Mr. *Erskine*, and ap-
 pointing him to be rebuked for several indecent
 Expressions, impugning several Acts of Assembly
 and Proceedings of Church-judicatories; from
 whence it is obvious, That the Assembly found
 Mr. *Erskine's* Expressions to be offensive, and
 tending to disturb the Peace and good Order of
 the Church, upon the same Ground on which
 the Synod found them to be so, that is, *Be-
 cause they impugn'd some Acts of Assembly,
 and Proceedings of Church-judicatories.* And
 seeing what Mr. *Erskine* advanced anent the
 Unlawfulness of the Act 1732, ——— and the
 unwarrantable Proceedings of Church-judicatories
 in the Settlement of Ministers, in Consequence
 of the Patronage-Act and the foresaid Act of
 Assembly, makes up the greatest Part of the con-
 demned Expressions; and that no other Act of
 Assembly is attacked in his Sermon, as unlawful,
 but the Act 1732, anent the Settlement of vacant
 Congregations, nor any other Proceedings of
 Church-judicatories, but the present Proceedings
 in the violent Settlement of Ministers: It is im-
 possible, that the Ground of the Synod's Sentence,
 approven of, and adopted by the Assembly, can
 have any other Meaning but a condemning Mr.
Erskine for telling his Sentiments freely in the
 Pulpit concerning the Sefulness of the Act 1732,
 and other arbitrary Proceedings of Church-Judica-
 tories in the violent Settlement of Ministers, in

Consequence of the Patronage-Act, the said Act of Assembly, and sometimes in a different Manner from both, when it tended to strengthen their Party, as in the Case of *Kinross*. When therefore the Assembly rebuked and admonished Mr. *Erskine*, because he impugn'd the above Act 1732, and the foresaid Proceedings of Church-Judicatories, it is plain that they reckoned his Freedom in this Matter to be censurable, as well as Heterodoxy in Doctrine: And therefore the protesting Brethren had just Reason to complain of this Procedure, as having a direct Tendency to shut their Mouths from testifying doctrinally against the present Current of Defection, and as laying a Restraint upon Ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness, inconsistent with their Ordination-Vows and Engagements. And, however it is now pretended, That it was only for the Indecency of the Expression, that Mr. *Erskine* was rebuked; yet, as the Act and Sentence itself (as has been already shown) expressly bears, That the Matter, as well as the Manner of Expression, was condemned both by the Synod and Assembly; so the chief Managers and Framers of the Act had no other View of it: For the Reverend and Honourable Members of the Assembly's Committee, that were appointed to converse with the Four Brethren after their Protestation was given in, plainly told them, That it was unjustifiable to speak from the Pulpit against any Act of Assembly, or the Proceedings of Church-Judicatories. And when the Brethren replied, That this was an invading of a Protestant Principle contained in our *Confession of Faith*, if Ministers were censured for disburdening their Consciences as to publick Church-Proceedings, which

which appear to them to be contrary to the Word of God, and to sap the Foundation of our Church-Constitution; They were likewise told, That, if they could not be silent from speaking against Acts of Assembly, and the Proceedings of the Judicatories, that then they should go out of the Church: So that, both from the Terms of the Assembly's Act and Sentence, and the declared Mind of the Framers of it, it evidently appears, that Mr. *Erskine* was rebuked for testifying against the Act of Assembly 1732, and the present Proceedings of Church-Judicatories, and not merely for the indecent Terms in which it is alledged he emitted that Testimony, which justifies both the Protestation and the Adherence unto it. And, to illustrate this a little further, we shall only observe upon this Head, That neither Mr. *Erskine* nor any of the other Three Brethren did protest for Liberty to use indecent Expressions in preaching against unlawful Acts of Assembly, or the sinful Proceedings of Judicatories; but only maintained, That the Truths delivered by Mr. *Erskine* should not be condemned, and asserted their Privilege and Duty to testify against the Act of Assembly 1732, and the like Defections of this Church.

We proceed now to consider what is advanced in the *Narrative* to justify the Act and Sentence of the Synod against Mr. *Erskine*, and consequently the Act of Assembly affirming the same, even as it is laid by the *Narrative*-Writers themselves. And, that the Reverend Committee may expose as they imagine the protesting Brethren, they take Notice of four Particulars charged against Mr. *Erskine* by the Synod, *Pag. 2, 3, 4, &c.* and endeavour to represent them in the most

odious Colours: But the Reader must know, That more as eight Propositions were charged against Mr. *Erskine* by the Synod, and they were all condemned as censurable Expressions. If we had got a true and fair *Narrative* of the Proceedings of the Church-Judicatories, all the condemned Propositions ought to have been narrated, for this good Reason, That the Synod condemned them all in Bulk as censurable, without making a Difference as to any one of them; and so did the Assembly after them, with this Addition, That they condemned his *Answers* likewise, as their above Act and Sentence bears.

And here we must observe, That if a Number of Propositions are condemned in Bulk, which was done in the present Case, suppose some of them were unjustifiable (which we can by no Means grant with respect to any of the Propositions emitted by Mr. *Erskine*) yet, if Truth is condemned amongst a Bundle of unjustifiable Propositions, it is Duty to bear Testimony unto it against the said condemnatory Sentence: And therefore, if any one of the Propositions emitted by Mr. *Erskine* (which were all condemned in Bulk) was a Divine Truth, there was sufficient Reason for a Testimony against the Sentence of the Synod finding them all censurable, and against the Act of Assembly affirming the same.

As the *Narrative* is neither full, nor fair, when it tells us, *Page 8.* The Particulars condescended on are *but some of the indecent and offensive Instances insisted upon by the Synod*; We shall give an Instance in one or two of the condemned Propositions emitted by the Committee, which we affirm are neither indecent, nor can
give

give any just Ground of Offence : And we must refer the Reader frequently to the *True State of the Process*, published some Time ago ; and this cannot be refused as a sufficient Voucher, seeing it contains an Extract of the Process, under the Hands of the Synod-Clerk.

The first Instance we give is, That Mr. *Erskine* was condemned for affirming in his Sermon, *That mistaken Notions of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was the Ground of many Things that were wrong among us at this Day* ; *True State*, p. 15. Or, as it runs in his *Answers*, p. 20. (which were also condemned by the Assembly) *I am persuaded, that carnal Notions of the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of this World, ly at the Bottom of the many Evils and Corruptions of this Day.* This we look upon as a very great Truth, That wrong Notions of the Kingdom of Christ ly at the Bottom of the Evils that are at present complained of ; such as, the conferring the Privilege of calling Ministers upon Heritors, *as such* ; yea, the receiving of disaffected Heritors into our Bosom, and intrusting them with the foresaid valuable Privilege, as is done by the Act of Assembly 1732 ; as also, the imposing of Ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations upon Presentations from Patrons ; together with many other Evils and Corruptions, which may be mentioned in due Time.

Another of the condemned Expressions omitted by the Committee is, *That whatever Church-authority was in that Act, (viz. the Act 1732) that there was nothing of the Authority of the Head of the Church in it ; and that he was sure it had no Foundation in Scripture, where there is no Distinction made in spiritual Matters be-*
twixt

twixt the rich Man with the Gold-ring and gay Clothing, and the poor Man. True State, p. 18.

That there is nothing of the Authority of the Head of the Church in the Act of Assembly 1732, and that it has no Foundation in Scripture, is a Truth, which the Reverend Committee themselves are not ashamed to own, when they affirm, *p. 3. That the Scriptures do not determine who shall be the Electors of Ministers.* It is therefore abundantly obvious, that the above Proposition was condemned, only because it impugned the Act of Assembly 1732, which is merely a human Constitution, as is confess'd by themselves. And indeed it has been always observed, that Church-authority has never been so keenly interposed, as for the Observance of these Rites and Statutes which have had no Foundation in the Word of God: And therefore, because Mr. *Erskine* testified freely against the Act 1732, which had nothing but bare Church-authority to support it, he must be condemned for indecent Expressions, impugning several Acts of Assembly, and Proceedings of Church-judicatories; altho' it was evident from the Whole of the Reasoning in Synod upon this Matter, that his Expressions had no further Indecency in them, than as they intended to impugn the foresaid Act 1732, and the Proceedings of the Judicatories founded thereupon. However, because the *Narrative* would persuade the World, that the Foundation of the Sentence of Rebuke, past by the Synod and General Assembly, was not Mr. *Erskine's* impugning the Authority of the Act 1732, but the indecent Manner in which it was done; therefore, besides what has been made appear

pear

pear to the contrary, from the very Words of the above Act and Sentence itself, we shall take the Liberty once for all to observe upon this Head, That, if there be any Thing faulty in Words, it is in the Application and Connection of them: For the same Words may be either decent or indecent, as they are applied to Persons and Things, and Expressions vary according to the Intention of the Speaker; and therefore it is reasonable to allow the Speaker to purge his Guilt by declaring his Intention, which Mr. *Erskine* accordingly did in his *Answers* to the *Remarks*, containing the quarrelled Expressions, wherein he stated the said Expressions in their Connection with the other Parts of his Discourse: But his *Answers* were intirely overlookt by the Synod, and condemned in Bulk by the Assembly upon one single Hearing, without enquiring into the Relevancy of any one of them to infer Censure. Now, as these Propositions which the Committee have omitted in their *Narrative* are intirely unexceptionable, so there would not have been any Thing found either indecent or worthy of Censure in these which they have cull'd out, if they had not been at great Pains to gloss them in to it, that they might the more easily support the Charge, not only of oblique Scandal, which they fix upon them, but also of Scandal in most positive, plain, and express Words emitted by him, *Narrative*, p. 9. which yet is a very lame Charge, unless the scandalous Application be proven.

We shall therefore proceed to enquire, If there be such Indecency in the Expressions which the Reverend Committee think fit to mention, as will infer either an oblique, or a positive, plain

and direct Scandal, deserving the Censures of the Church ?

The first Proposition which they mention is,
 “ That Mr. *Erskine* did not scruple to compare
 “ the Ministers of the Church of *Scotland* to that
 “ vile and degenerate Sett of Men, the Priests and
 “ Teachers of the *Jewish* Church, who crucified
 “ our blessed Saviour.” *Nar.* p. 2. And, after the
Narraters have made made some warm Reflections upon the above Proposition, they add, That
 “ when the Synod put it to him to declare him-
 “ self with respect to this Particular, he decli-
 “ ned to answer, p. 3.” And yet, a little above,
 they own he denied the Charge. But the Reason they give is, That Mr. *Erskine* said, “ He
 “ knows that there is a Body of faithful Mini-
 “ sters in this Church, with whom he does not
 “ reckon himself worthy to be compared.” But
 they think fit to set their Thumb upon the first
 and principal Reason that was given by Mr. *Erskine*
 for denying the foresaid Charge, and it is
 as follows, *This Charge is not, nor cannot be,*
proven by any Passages in my Discourse ; *True*
State, p. 20. As the above Remark is none of
 Mr. *Erskine*’s Expressions, so it is none of the
 Expressions condemned as censurable by the Synod
 or General Assembly ; it is only an Inference
 (but dress’d up in a worse Shape by the *Narraters*)
 made by one or two of the keen Managers against
 Mr. *Erskine*, who laid some Remarks upon his
 Sermon before a Committee of the Synod, and the
 Committee agreed to transmit them to the Synod,
 without giving any Judgment upon them, *True State,*
 p. 14. And when the Remarks were laid before the
 Synod, the

the Synod distinguished between the Expressions alledged to be Mr. *Erskine's*, and the Remarks upon them; and they found the Expressions given in by the Committee to have been emitted by Mr. *Erskine*, but never adopted the Inferences or Remarks. And, since the Synod have never sustained the Justice of them, it can never be alledged that ever they came under the Cognizance of the *Assembly*; and therefore the *Narrative-Writers* should have been better acquainted with the Process, before they had told the World in their Title-Page, That the Proceedings of the Judicatories, &c. are fairly stated. And from the Observation that we have just now made, That the Remarks upon Mr. *Erskine's* Sermon were never adopted by the Synod or their Committee, the *Narrative-Writers* may see, that the Pleadings they mention of the honourable Sir *Peter King* at the Trial of Doctor *Sacheverel*, p. 9. are to no Purpose in the present Case.

The second Particular the *Narrative* mentions is, That, "As to the Manner of calling of Ministers, Mr. *Erskine* asserted, That these who have their Call from Heritors, or any other Sett of Men (meaning Elders) only, and not from the whole Church, were Thieves and Robbers, and had not God's Call." These Expressions are not laid by the *Narrative* in the express Terms in which they are charged against Mr. *Erskine* by the Synod; neither are his *Answers* noticed, in which he refers to his Sermon, and never owned the above Charge as laid by the Synod. The Words of his Sermon, at which the above Charge seems to point, are as follow; *Let us set ourselves to stop these Passages into the*
House

House of God, by which Thieves and Robbers most ordinarily enter, that the House of God be not turned into a Den of Thieves. The *Narrative-Writers* think fit frequently to argue from the Scope and Design of Mr. *Erskine's* Sermon : If they will allow us for once to do so, 'tis evident to any that reads it, that the Design of the condemn'd Passages in his Sermon was, to show the Sinfulness and Unwarrantableness of settling Ministers over reclaiming and dissenting Congregations in consequence of the Act 1732, or otherwise. And, whatever the *Narrative-Writers* may think, we cannot but judge, for the many Reasons already published unto the World, that such as are settled over reclaiming and dissenting Congregations, are violent Intruders into the Vineyard of the Lord : And, if the Words seem harsh, that violent Settlements *are the Passages by which Thieves and Robbers most ordinarily enter the House of God* ; yet they have some Countenance from the Word of Him whose Words are all pure, *John x. 1. He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other Way, the same is a Thief and Robber.*

After some Sallies of Passion on the above Proposition, and a Sneer on the Scripture-expression of *sounding the Trumpet in Zion*, the *Narrative-Writers* inform us, That the above Expressions, alledged to be Mr. *Erskine's*, are the more criminal in him, “ Because the holy Scriptures
 “ seem not to determine who shall be the Electors
 “ of Ministers ; and that he himself and his Adherents have not to this Day come to any
 “ Agreement about it ; That the Manner of
 “ Election has been very different in different
 “ Places

“ Places and Times of the Church ; That po-
 “ pular Elections of Ministers do not obtain in
 “ the Protestant Churches abroad ; That great,
 “ good, and learned Men have differed in their
 “ Judgment about this Point, and yet still exer-
 “ cised mutual Forbearance ; That our own
 “ Church has changed her Practice frequently
 “ in this Matter, the *Second Book of Discipline*
 “ placing it in the Presbytery, the Assembly
 “ *Anno 1649* putting it in the Hands of the Kirk-
 “ session, and our worthy Forefathers in the Mini-
 “ stry at the Revolution, having an active Hand in
 “ framing, and afterwards cheerfully submitting to
 “ the Act of Parliament *Anno 1690*, which or-
 “ dains, *That the Heritors (being Protestants)*
 “ *and Elders name and propose the Person to*
 “ *the whole Congregation, to be approven, or*
 “ *disapproven by them.*” These Propositions
 are nothing else but a Compend of the *Modest*
and Humble Enquiry into the Method of settling
Parishes : And indeed, the Whole of this *Nar-*
rative seems to smell rank of the bitter Spirit of
 that Author, whose Performances have been ful-
 ly answered and exposed by several judicious
 Hands. However, because an Abstract of his
 Works is here adopted by the *Reverend Commit-*
tee, writing by Authority from the Commission
 of the General Assembly, we judge it our Duty
 to vindicate the Principles of the *Church of*
Scotland, by a short Reply to each of the above
 Propositions.

As to the *First* of them, We are heartily for-
 ry that a Committee of the Commission should
 aver, “ That the Holy Scriptures seem not to de-
 “ termine who shall be the Electors of Mini-
 “ sters.” This, we doubt not to affirm, is more

criminal than any Thing that has been done by the protesting Brethren ; in Regard it is as much as if the *Narrative-Writers* had said, That the only wise God our Saviour, the Head and King of the Church, who was *faithful in all his own House as a Son*, has laid down no Rule in his Word to direct his Church in the Election of their Pastors ; or that he has left his Heritage and Flock to have their Pastors and Overseers imposed upon them by the Election and Choice of disaffected Heritors, or by a Presentation from a Patron, or according to the Will and Pleasure of a corrupt and self-designing Clergy, as they shall think fit to enact when met in a General Assembly, or as their Commission shall think fit to order and direct. If such a Principle as this, which reflects so much upon the Honour of the Head of the Church, and is so injurious to his Members, being vented under the Wings of a Commission of the General Assembly, is not expressly condemned by the Supreme Judicatory, we must look upon it as adopted by them, in Opposition to the received and known Principles of this Church in former Times.

As to their *Second Proposition*, “ That Mr. *Erskine* and his Adherents have not to this Day come to any Agreement about it, who shall be the Electors of Ministers.” As this is affirmed without Proof ; so the protesting Ministers are fully agreed, that, to impose Ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations, willing to choose, or consenting to have faithful Pastors set over them, is contrary unto the Word of God, to sound Reason, to the laudable Acts and Constitutions of this Church, and a grievous Oppression of the Flock and Heritage of God :
And

And this is the chief Point in Controversy betwixt the present Managers and us.

As to their *Third* Assertion, we agree with them, "That the Manner of Election has been very different in different Places and Times of the Church;" just as Popery, Prelacy, or Presbytery did prevail.

Their *Fourth* Position is, "That Popular Elections of Ministers do not obtain in the Protestant Churches abroad." To which we answer, That, whatever has been the late Practice of some Protestant Churches abroad, overrun with *Prelacy* or *Erastianism*; yet the Reverend Committee will oblige us, if they will shew us, from any of the Confessions or received Standards of Doctrine and Discipline of any of the reformed Churches abroad, that they allow Ministers to be settled in Opposition to the declared Mind of Christian Congregations; yea, we are ready, when required, to produce their unanimous Consent with the Church of *Scotland* to the contrary.

In Answer to their *Fifth* Proposition, we affirm, That, however other great and learned Men might have differed in their Judgments about the Manner of Calling of Ministers, yet Presbyterians have generally been at one in this Matter; and we put them to it, to shew us any Divine of the Presbyterian Denomination in this Church, that ever affirmed, that Ministers may be warrantably settled over dissenting and reclaiming Congregations, willing to choose a Gospel-Minister, till now that the Author of the *Modest and Humble Enquiry* has appeared on the Stage: Nor can they produce a Presbyterian Divine among all the Churches abroad, that has wrote in
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Defence of their Scheme, delivering up the Settlement of Congregations into the Hands of Heritors *as such*, and even of these who are entirely disaffected to their own Constitution.

As to their *last* Assertion, Aktho' they alledge, That the Church of *Scotland* has frequently changed her Practice in this Matter of the Calling of Ministers; yet we affirm, and are able to make it good, That the Church of *Scotland* has never in any Rule that she has laid down about the Settlement of Ministers (before the Act 1732) given the least Countenance to the Practice of imposing Ministers upon a dissenting and reclaiming People, making a professed Subjection to Gospel-Ordinances, and declaring themselves willing to choose a Gospel-Minister; yea, that, in all the Church-Rules formerly laid down about the Settlement of Ministers, the Call and Consent of the Congregations concerned, has been expressly required. We shall confine ourselves to the two Instances of Church-Rules that the *Narrative* condescends upon, and both of them plainly require the foresaid Call and Consent, &c. altho' the Reverend Committee have thought fit to represent the Matter otherwise. *First*, they say, That the *Second Book of Discipline* placed the Right of Election in the Presbytery. But, granting it were so, which still we have good Reason to deny, the Congregation had a Negative upon the Presbytery, so as that they could not fix a Minister upon them without their Consent; as is evident from the following Passages, *Chap. 3. § 4.* "The ordinary and outward Calling hath
" two Parts, Election and Ordination: Election
" is the Choosing out of a Person or Persons, most
" able to the Office that vaiks, by the Judgment
" of

“ of the Eldership (*i. e.* the Presbytery) and
 “ Consent of the Congregation to which the Per-
 “ son or Persons shall be appointed. And, § 5. In
 “ the Order of Election is to be eschewed that
 “ any Person be intruded into any Office of the
 “ Kirk, contrary to the Will of the Congregati-
 “ on to which they are appointed, or without
 “ the Voice of the Eldership.” From which
 Passages it plainly appears, that the *Second Book*
of Discipline has such a sacred Regard to the
 Consent of the Parish, that it by no Means allows
 the Presbytery to impose a Minister upon a dis-
 senting and reclaiming People, as is the Practice
 of our Managers at this Day. It is with as little
 Ground that the Reverend Committee insinuate,
 That the Assembly 1649 has put the Power of
 Election into the Hands of the Kirk-session, ex-
 clusive of the Consent of the People. For, altho’
 that Act did place the positive Election in the
 Hands of the Kirk-session, yet it was with an ex-
 press Reservation of the Consent of the Congre-
 gation, as will appear to any that will read the
 Act itself.

The *Act of Parliament* 1690 is alledged as
 another Evidence that the Church of *Scotland*
 has changed her Practice in this Matter. Tho’ it
 cannot be pretended that the foresaid Act was a
 Rule laid down by the Church, yet, since the
Narrative-Writers apprehend they have so great
 Advantage on their Side of the Question from the
 Submission that they alledge was given unto it, we
 shall only observe, (1.) That as it does not deter-
 mine the Right of Election to be in the Persons
 of Heritors or Elders, so it reserves to the
 People their Consent: For it ordains, that the
Heritors and Elders name and propose the Person
 to

to the whole Congregation, to be approven or disapproven by them. And therefore, (2.) Altho' the *Narrative* bears, " That Mr. *Erskine* and " these faithful Ministers he speaks of (as they " are pleased to expresse themselves by way of " Ridicule) have no other Call than after the " Manner of the Act of Parliament 1690 ;" that is, altho' they have been named and proposed to the respective Congregations, and have been approved by them ; Yet even from this it is evident, that they have been settled with the Call and Consent of their respective Congregations : And therefore there is no Ground for the Reflection that the *Narrative-Writers* have made. Upon the Whole, it is evident, that the Church of *Scotland* has never changed her Practice in the Matter of settling Ministers, which since the Reformation has always been with Consent of Congregations concern'd, till a few Years before the passing of the Act of Assembly 1732, which has effectually robb'd them of that valuable Privilege : And therefore Mr. *Erskine* would not have been guilty of such a great Crime as is alledged, altho' he had said, That they who have a Call from *Patron*, *Heritors*, or any other Sett of Men, without the Consent and against the declared Minds of Christian Congregations, have not God's Call, *i. e.* the Call prescribed in his Word ; for it is no more upon the Matter than what this Church has always asserted, as appears from what is above advanced.

The third indecent Expression the *Narrative* mentions is, " That Mr. *Erskine* charged our " pious Ancestors with a sinful Silence, in not " giving Testimony at the Revolution by an express Act against the Encroachments made upon " pon

“pon Christ’s Kingly Office in the preceeding
 “Reigns.” *Narrative*, Page 4th. His Words,
 as they ly in his condemn’d Answers, are as fol-
 low; “I do not remember of any particular Act
 “of Assembly since the Revolution, whereby
 “the Rights of the Crown of Christ and his
 “supreme Headship in the Church is asserted, in
 “Opposition to the Encroachments that were
 “made upon it in the late Times of Persecution
 “and Tyranny.” *True State*, Page 23d. We
 are sorry he had so much Ground to say so; Was
 not Christ sacrilegiously robb’d of his Headship
 by Parliamentary Acts and Deeds in the late per-
 secuting Reigns? Did not all Ranks of Persons,
 in the Oath of *Supremacy*, and in the abominable
Test, renounce the Headship and Sovereignty of
 Christ over his own House? Is there any Act of
 Assembly condemning these Abominations? Were
 they ever particularly named among the Grounds
 and Causes of our National Fasts? Does the ge-
 neral and ambiguous Expression in the Act of
 Assembly 1690 expressly condemn these sacrile-
 gious Usurpations upon the Royal Prerogatives of
 Zion’s King? The Land is therefore still groining
 under the Load and Weight of that hainous Guilt;
 and, till our *Narrative-Writers* shall shew us a
 plain express express Testimony against the above
 Encroachments made upon the Kingly Office of
 Christ, it must remain evident unto us, that there
 was no Ground for finding Mr. *Erskine* censu-
 rable, because in his Sermon he said, He did not
 remember of any particular Act asserting the
 Rights of the Crown of Christ, and his supreme
 Headship in the Church, *in Opposition unto*
the Encroachments that were made upon it in
the late Times of Persecution and Tyranny.

We proceed now to the last Thing the *Narrative* takes out of the Synod's Charge ; and it is a Passage of the Sermon that transports the *Narraters* into a more than ordinary Rage and Passion : But, as we promised in the Entry, we shall not rake into such Dunghils. The Passage, as it stands in the *Narrative*, p. 6. is, “ That a
 “ Cry had gone up to Heaven, in the Words of
 “ the Spouse, That *the Watchmen who went a-*
 “ *bout the City had found her, and smote her,*
 “ *and taken her Vail from her* ; and that this
 “ Cry had come before the General Assembly
 “ 1732 : But that, instead of redressing this and
 “ other Grievances, they increased them, by
 “ lodging the Power of Election in Heritors
 “ and Elders, whereby Christ was deeply woun-
 “ ded in his Members.” Here we must observe,
 That the Synod's Charge against Mr. *Erskine* is
 nor fairly represented : The Words in the Syn-
 od's Charge are, *They increased them (viz.*
the Grievances) by lodging the Power of Electi-
on in Heritors and Elders, excluding the People,
 — True State, p. 17. These are the Expres-
 sions charged against Mr. *Erskine* by the Synod,
 and found censurable by the General Assembly ;
 but that Clause, *Excluding the People*, is un-
 fairly, but very industriously omitted by the *Nar-*
rative-Writers, that the Charge may be repre-
 sented with the greater Disadvantage to Mr. *Er-*
skine. As the Expressions run in the Synod's
 Charge, we own he had too much Ground for
 them : Is it not Matter of Fact, That the Cry of
 Violence done to the Heritage of God came be-
 fore the Bar of the Assembly 1732, both by a Re-
 presentation and Petition from above forty *Mini-*
sters and some Elders, and by a Representation
 and

and Petition from about 1600 well-affected *People* from different Corners of this Church? and yet, instead of redressing the Grievances complained of, they got the Yoke wreathed harder and faster about their Neck, by an Ecclesiastical Act and Constitution, delivering up the Settlement of our Congregations into the Hands of *Heritors*, and even into the Hands of such as are openly disaffected to our valuable *Civil Liberties*, as well as our Presbyterian Church-Government and Discipline. The *Narrative* adds, "Yea, so daring" "was he, that he was not afraid to say, That if" "Christ were personally present, as the said Mr." "Erskine was by the Appointment of the Synod in his Stead, he would say, with respect to" "the General Assembly 1732, (with respect to" "that Act, *True State*, p. 25.) *In as far as*" "ye have done it unto one of these little Ones," "you did it unto me." Is it the Solemnity of the Expression that is here quarrelled? Mr. *Erskine* as a *Minister* of the Gospel was standing in Christ's Stead, and Ministers ought to deliver nothing but what they are perswaded they have Christ's Warrant for; and this is the Sum total of what the *Narrative* makes so much Noise about, That Mr. *Erskine* affirmed he had his Master's Warrant for what he said. We sincerely wish our *Managers* would seriously consider the Matter; and, if they can bear it without making a Jest of it, we are not afraid to tell them, That the Prayers, Groans and Complaints of the oppressed Heritage of God from all the Corners of *Scotland* are gone up into the Ears of Him who hath said, *I will arise for the Oppression of the Poor, and for the Sighing of the Needy*: And, let them make of it what they will, we are assured

red from his Word, that any Violence or Wrong done to his Members, he takes it as done to himself; and that, when this is done by those that bear the Character of *Spiritual Watchmen*, it is the more hainous, in regard they are obliged by their Office to strengthen and support, to protect and defend to the utmost of their Power the Sheep and Flock of Christ, against any Injuries that may be done them.

We shall not trouble the Reader with noticing the many other Invectives upon the above Passage of the Sermon: Only, since the *Reverend Committee* put the following Question, viz. *Is there not here a fierce Attack on the Honour and Authority of this Church, and a Representation of the Administration as Tyrannical?* We make the following Observe upon this pungent Query: That it is plain, that speaking against the Act of Assembly 1732 was the main Ground of all this Quarrel, and all the other Expressions were only drawn in as Auxiliaries to support them in this: And therefore their Repentment upon this Score will be the less surprising, when it is considered, that when they could not found their Act upon, nor support it by Scripture nor Reason, they thought themselves under a Necessity to make mere *Authority* supply these notable Defects. But, is not Church-authority grossly abused, when it is stretched beyond the Line of the Word? Is not the Administration tyrannical, when the Flock and Heritage of God are thereby broken, scattered and oppressed? And, is not this done, when Ministers are intruded upon Christian Congregations, contrary to the Word of God and our known Principles, in Consequence of the Act 1732 and otherwise?

We

We have now gone through the several Particulars alledged by the *Narrative* to justify the Act and Sentence of the Assembly approving the Proceedings of the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* against Mr. *Erskine*, and appointing him to be rebuked at the Assembly's Bar ; and we are persuaded, that, if Prejudice and Passion are laid aside, it will be found that there was nothing said by him that deserves such a Censure : But, before we pass this Head, we shall consider what is advanced by the *Narrative* concerning the Censure inflicted upon him ; they proclaim the Mildness of the Synod and Assembly in passing no higher Censure than a simple Rebuke and Admonition; *Page 7.* This they reckon the *lowest Censure known in our Church*, p. 11. They call it a *slight Censure*, p. 50. And they affirm, *If Mr. Erskine had been silent at the Rebuke, he could not have thereby contracted any Manner of Guilt, or drawn Sin upon himself*, p. 22. But a Censure of Rebuke and Admonition by a Judicatory of the Church, is a solemn, grave and weighty Censure ; it is not to be dispensed without Necessity, and only upon the most evident Grounds and Reasons, especially when it respects Matters of Doctrine delivered by a Minister : And when a Rebuke is given for declaring what One is persuaded is the Mind of God, to receive this Rebuke and Admonition with Silence is an Acknowledgment of the Justice of it, and it is upon the Matter an Engagement not to utter these Truths again ; and this cannot be done without Sin, especially when the Silence enjoined respects the publick Cause of God and his Church : Therefore, when Mr. *Erskine* was rebuked for testifying plainly against the present Current of Defection in

in the violent Settlements of Ministers, so contrary to the Word of God and the received Principles of the Church of *Scotland*, if he had received this Rebuke with Silence, he had betrayed the Testimony he gave, and would have given up with his just Right and Privilege of testifying against the Act of Assembly 1732, or the like Defections of this Church. To conclude this Head, the Act and Sentence of Assembly against Mr. *Erskine* approves the Proceedings of the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling*, finding him censurable, and appointing him to be rebuked for several indecent Expressions uttered in his Sermon, tending to disquiet the Peace of this Church, and *impugning several Acts of Assembly and Proceedings of the Church-judicatories*; that is, they approve the Proceedings of the Synod, finding Mr. *Erskine* censurable for testifying freely in his Synodical Sermon against the Act 1732, and the present unwarrantable and sinful Proceedings of this Church in the violent Settlement of Ministers; and therefore, in order to terminate the Process, the Assembly appointed him to be rebuked at their own Bar. The *Protesting Brethren* did justly look upon this Sentence to be an Inhibition laid upon Ministers from testifying from the Pulpit against such gross Corruptions, and to be a Directory laid down to all the inferior Judicatories of this Church, how to proceed against any Ministers who might upon some proper Occasions testify against the Act 1732 or the like Defections; And this Restriction upon their Ministry appeared to them to be the more dangerous, when they considered how impetuous the Current of Defection runs at present, and how such violent Settlements are carried on with

a high Hand, and in a Manner unprecedented in the Church of *Scotland*, whereby a wide Door is opened for bringing in a corrupt and lax Ministry among us: Therefore Mr. *Erskine* could not receive the Assembly's Rebuke with Silence, but judged it his Duty to protest against the foresaid Censure of Rebuke and Admonition, " *As importing* that " he had in his Doctrine, at the Opening of the " Synod of *Perth*, departed from the Word of " God and the foresaid Standards; and that he " should be at Liberty to preach the same Truths " of God, and to testify against the same or like " Defections of this Church, upon all proper " Occasions: Adhering thereby unto the Testi- " monies he had formerly emitted against the " Act 1732, whether in the Protest entred a- " gainst it in open Assembly, or yet in his Sy- " nodical Sermon."

The other three Brethren durst not be silent Witnesses to the above *sinful Embargo* laid upon Ministers, and therefore judged themselves obliged by their Ordination Vows and Engagements, and for their own just Exoneration before the present, and to transmit a Testimony to succeeding Generations, to sign an *Adherence* " to the above " Protestation and Declaration, containing a Te- " stimony against the Act of Assembly 1732, and " asserting their Privilege and Duty to testify " publickly against the same or the like Defections " upon all proper Occasions." The General Assembly was so much offended at the said *Prote- station*, and *Adherence* unto it, that they appointed the four Brethren " to compear before their " Commission in *August* thereafter, and to show " their Sorrow for their Conduct and Mis- be-

“ behaviour in offering to protest, and in giving
 “ in to the Assembly the Paper subscribed by them,
 “ and that they then retract the same. And in
 “ case they do not compear before the Commis-
 “ sion in *August*, and then show their Sorrow,
 “ and retract as said is, the Commission is impowe-
 “ red and appointed to suspend the said Brethren,
 “ or such of them as shall not obey, from the
 “ Exercise of their Ministry. And in case the
 “ said Brethren shall be suspended by the Commis-
 “ sion, and that they shall act contrary to the
 “ said Sentence of Suspension, the Commission is
 “ empowered and appointed, at their Meeting in
 “ *November*, or any subsequent Meeting, to pro-
 “ ceed to a higher Censure against the said four
 “ Brethren, or such of them as shall continue to
 “ offend, by transgressing this Act.”

Before we consider the Arguments and Reasonings of the *Reverend Committee* of the Commission for the Justice of the above severe Sentences past against the four protesting Brethren, as also for their Submission to the same, we shall enquire into the Account that is given by the *Narrative* of the Conduct of Mr. *Erskine* and the other three Brethren, till the passing of the above Sentence against them: Tho’ there is scarce any Matter of Fact, but what is artfully disguised or misrepresented by the *Narraters*; yet we shall not weary the Reader with noticing every Incident, and we hope we shall not pass by any Thing that deserves Consideration.

The *Narrative*, p. 7, and 8. informs us, “ That
 “ the Synod that met at *Stirling*, *April* thereafter,
 “ were at all imaginable Pains to gain Mr. *Erskine*;
 “ and that they appointed several Committees to
 “ deal with him, to bring him to his Duty.”

But,

But, from what is above observed, the Reader may understand what the Synod demanded of him, *viz.* To submit to a Rebuke and Admonition, for testifying in his Sermon against a sinful Act of Assembly, and the unwarrantable Proceedings of the Judicatories of this Church in the Settlement of Ministers: And therefore the Reader may see why he could not submit to their Censure, but was laid under a Necessity to bring his Case, by an Appeal from the Synod, before the General Assembly.

As to Mr. *Erskine's* Conduct when the Affair came before the General Assembly, the *Narrative*, p. 13. repeats some Stories forged by the Prefacer to the two Acts of Assembly, published immediately after the Rising of the last Assembly, which were fully answered in the Preface to the *True State of the Process*, to which we refer the Reader; where he will find a just and true Account of Mr. *Erskine's* Conduct and Behaviour before the Assembly; and that it is not Matter of Fact which is repeated by the *Narrative*, "That he stood by, and heard his Lawiers, without contradicting them, depart from the Confession that he had made concerning the Right of the Christian People of a Congregation to choose their own Ministers." For, tho' it is not Fact that the learned Gentlemen, in their Pleadings, did place the Right of electing Ministers in the Judicatories of the Church, exclusive of the Christian People of a Congregation; yet Mr. *Erskine*, being interrogate at the Desire of a Reverend Member, declared in open Assembly, That he would not adopt every Thing spoken by the Lawiers at the Bar.

But the *Narrative* falls heavy upon Mr. *Erskine*, for protesting against the Sentence of the Assembly

bly approving the Synod's Proceedings, as guilty of what is most irregular and unprecedented; and they alledge, "That, by his Appeal from the inferior Judicatory to the Assembly, he was bound to submit to, and acquiesce in, their Decision; and that his Appeal was a submitting the Cause absolutely to the General Assembly," p. 15, 16.

To this we answer, That it seems the Reverend Committee, who live near the Court of Justice, have no Notion of any Kind of Protest but for *Remed in Law*; and know nothing of Protestations by Way of Testimony, which are admitted in Courts both Civil and Ecclesiastick in many Cases, not only against a publick Law which is conceived to be iniquous, but even against a Sentence upon a private Person, when that Sentence seems to affect the whole publick Society, and to lay an evident Restriction upon their Liberty (which was the Case in Hand.) And it is no Matter whether the Cause come by Way of Appeal to the supreme Court, or if it be originally intended there; for in either of these Cases a Protestation is necessary to testify in open Court, that the Party does not yield his Consent to that Deed of the Court. And this is the Reason which the *Narrative* gives, p. 5. why the Synod thought themselves obliged to testify their Displeasure against Mr. *Erskine*, viz. "Lest their Silence should be constructed an Approbation of his alledged Guilt." And therefore Mr. *Erskine's* Conduct was neither so irregular, nor unprecedented, as is alledged, when he protested for his own Exoneration against the Decision of the General Assembly.

Besides, it is plain, that, when One appeals from an inferior to a superior Judicatory, his Appeal is a material Declaration, that he expects Help and
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Redress from the superior Judicatory of an Injury that he conceives he has received. And, altho' we own that in a private and personal Cause, or in any Cause whereby Injury may be done to a Man in a Matter that only affects himself, in this Case the Decision of the supreme Judicatory, appealed to, must be acquiesced in; yet, if it is a publick Cause, wherein the Truths of God are concerned, or that Faithfulness and Freedom in Doctrine, which the Word of God requires, and their Ordination-vows and Engagements do bind Ministers unto; in this Case, we refuse that the Appellant is bound to submit, without a Testimony against it to the Decision even of the supreme Judicatory, when it is contrary to the Word of God, and the Obligations that Ministers are under from their Ordination-vows and Engagements. And the Reason is plain and obvious, viz. That all Authority in the Judicatories of the Church is for Edification, and not for Destruction; and the supreme Judicatory ought to support and protect Ministers in the Discharge of their Duty, and not to discourage and bear them down. To make this more plain, let us suppose, That a Synod should condemn us for preaching some of the Truths contained in our *Confession of Faith*: When we appeal to the Assembly, does our Appeal oblige us to give up with these Truths, if the Assembly should condemn them also? Nay; we appeal to the Assembly, expecting Protection and Support in asserting and owning the Truths of God contained in our *Confession of Faith*: But, if the Assembly shall condemn those Truths, must we therefore desert them? or, must we submit to a Sentence obliging us not to declare them from the Pulpit? If *Arbanasius* had been of this Way

of thinking with our *Narrators*; he had, no doubt, given up the supreme Deity of the Son of God, when *Arianism* was confirmed by eight several Councils. It is therefore our Duty to bear Testimony for condemned Truth, even in the Face of an Assembly itself, unless we give up with the Protestant Principle contained in our *Confession of Faith*, Chap. 1. Sect. 10. "The Supreme Judge, by which all Controversies of Religion are to be determined, and all Decrees of Councils are to be examined, and in whose Sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures."

The above supposed Instance is exactly parallel to Mr. *Erskine's* Case. He is condemned by the Synod of *Perth*, for the Freedom and Faithfulness he used in testifying against the Act 1732, and the present Proceedings of our Church-judicatories in the violent Settlement of Ministers; and therefore he is obliged to flee to the Assembly, to support and protect him in the Discharge of his Duty: But the Assembly, instead of supporting him, join Issue with the Synod in condemning him; and their condemnatory Sentence does, upon the Matter, shut the Mouths of all the Ministers of this Church from declaring against the present sinful and unwarrantable Courses. Was it not therefore Mr. *Erskine's* Duty, in this Case, to assert his just Right and Privilege, as a Minister of the Church, to testify against the Act 1732, or the like Defections? This is what is intended by his Protestation, and the Adherence made unto it.

Because the final Sentence of the Church in this Matter does, not only affect Mr. *Erskine*, but also other three Ministers; therefore the Committee think fit to shew in their own Manner, p. 10, &c.

"How

“ How they came to be so deeply concerned, and
 “ bring themselves under the same Sentence with
 “ him.”

They begin with Mr. *Fisher*, and say, “ That
 “ he appealed from the Sentence of the Synod
 “ upon the same Grounds with Mr. *Erskine*;
 “ further, because the Synod would not al-
 “ low him to judge in the Case of his Father-in-
 “ law.”

This is not Fact ; for he acquiesced in the Sen-
 tence of the Synod, refusing to allow him to judge
 and vote in that Cause ; (*True State*, p. 27.) and
 it was because the Synod did not allow him the
 Privilege of a Member in this Question, that he
 could not regularly join his dissenting Brethren,
 which he by far rather inclined to have done ;
 but was obliged to relieve his Conscience (this be-
 ing in his Opinion a publick Cause) by an Appeal
 to the General Assembly, which was founded al-
 lenarly upon this, “ That he judged the Sentence
 “ of the Synod, not only prejudicial to Mr. *Er-*
 “ *skine*, but injurious to the Truths of God’s
 “ Word,” as he endeavoured to evince in the
 Reasons of his said Appeal. As to the Reason
 they give of his interesting himself in this Quest-
 ion, and acting the Part (they say) he is known to
 have done in other Matters, *viz.* His Alliance
 to Mr. *Erskine* ; This is such an uncharitable Re-
 flection, and so far beyond their Province, it being
 nothing less than jumping into the Conscience,
 and judging of the secret Springs of Mens Acti-
 ons, that it does not deserve any Notice : How-
 ever, altho’ he is not to make the Authors of the
Narrative his Confessors in this Matter ; yet, if he
 is satisfied in his own Mind, as he hopes he is,
 that it was not from such a mean and low Prin-
 ciple

ciple as they alledge, that his Conduct in this and other Matters did flow, but from a View (as far as he is enabled by Grace) to support and contend for what he apprehends to be the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, he resolves to account it a very small Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment.

The *Narrative* also bears, *p.* 18. "That it must appear very extraordinary in Mr. *Fisher*, that he intruded himself into this Process, when the Committee of Bills pitied him for his imprudent Conduct, and, in Tenderness to him, took Care not to transmit his Appeal: Yet (say they) he gave his Adherence to Mr. *Erskine's* Proposition in the Terms in which it stands in the printed Act of Assembly." To which it is answered, That Mr. *Fisher* judged it his Duty, as a Minister of the Church of *Scotland*, and as a Member of the Synod of *Perth*, to appear in a Cause wherein his Ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness were so nearly concerned; and as he pled no Pity at the Hand of the Committee of Bills, so he did not reckon they shewed any Tenderness to him, when they did not transmit the Reasons of his Appeal, and thereby deprived him of his just Right and Privilege of being heard in this Cause before the General Assembly.

As for Mr. *Moncrieff*, the *Narrative* does not alledge that he acted contrary to his Right and Privilege as a Member of the Synod in dissenting from their Sentence: But say the *Narraters*, That to his Dissent Mr. *William Wilson* a Minister at *Perth* adhered, *p.* 11. But they should have said, Ten other Ministers with Two Elders adhered to the Dissent; see *True State*, *p.* 27. The *Narrative* would have all these Brethren inconsistent with them

themselves in their Dissent: For, *p. 11.* say the *Narrators*, “ This Dissent was of a very extraordinary Nature, if it is considered, that the dissenting Brethren, in their *Fifth* Reason of Dissent, say, “ That they cannot justify Mr. *Erskine's* Modes of Expression in the said Sermon. But, do they not by this justify the Sentence of the Synod for finding him censurable for some Expressions he had emitted therein? The Dissenters cannot justify; But what is it that the Synod does, but condemn them?”

The Sentiments of the *Twelve dissenting Ministers* from the Sentence of the Synod were very consistent with themselves in this Process; they knew very well that the Reasonings of the warm Managers against Mr. *Erskine* turn'd always upon the *Act of Assembly 1732*, and the Proceedings of the Church-judicatories in the Settlement of Ministers; and that they argued, That it was unwarrantable for us to open our Mouths upon any Occasion against the foresaid Act and Proceedings: And the dissenting Brethren, before the Affair was brought into a Vote in the Synod, moved, That the Synod should distinguish betwixt the Matter delivered by Mr. *Erskine* in the several Propositions charged against him by the Synod, and the Manner of his expressing himself; but this Motion was opposed, and the Vote, *Censurable, or not?* was stated, as including the Matter of his Sermon, as well as the Manner of his expressing himself; *True State, p. 34.* The Twelve dissenting Ministers knew very well, that, as the same Truths may be expressed by Men in a different Manner, according to their different Gifts and Talents, so it was not incumbent upon them to justify the Manner of Expression used by any that are not divinely in-

inspired, and that their chief Concern ought to be,
 that Truth receive no Injury nor Hurt. But, be-
 cause their Words are not fairly represented in the
Narrative, let them be heard for themselves ; And
 their *Fifth* Reason of Dissent is as follows, " We
 " dissent from, and protest against, the Sentence
 " of the Synod finding Mr. *Erskine* censurable for
 " some Expressions emitted by him in his Sermon
 " in the Opening of the said Synod, because we
 " view that the great Thing that stuck with the
 " Synod in this Matter, and determined them to
 " find Mr. *Erskine* censurable, was, his having
 " spoken in his Sermon against the Act of Assem-
 " bly 1732, anent Planting vacant Congregati-
 " ons: For, tho' we will not pretend to justify
 " every particular Mode of Expression used by
 " Mr. *Erskine* on this Head ; yet to find him
 " censurable for declaring his Mind against that
 " Act upon such an Occasion, appears to us a
 " Precedent of so dangerous a Nature and Ten-
 " dency, as we judge ourselves bound in Duty to
 " testify against." And, amongst the Reasons
 why they judge themselves bound in Duty thus
 to testify, the *Third* Reason is, " Because this
 " Step of the Synod's Conduct, in our Opinion,
 " makes a new Term of Ministerial Communion,
 " viz. That Ministers shall not, even in Discour-
 " ses to their Brethren, testify against any parti-
 " cular Act of Assembly, tho' convinced that it
 " was made *errante clave*, and has a native Ten-
 " dency to intimidate Ministers to testify against
 " the Defections that may happen in a Church in
 " their Day; and to induce them to sinful Silence
 " in the publick Cause, contrary to the Act of
 " Assembly 1646." See *True State*, p. 55. and 57.
 From the above Reasons of Dissent it is evident,
 That,

That, as the Twelve dissenting Ministers in the Synod were consistent with themselves, so the two protesting Brethren, against the Act and Sentence of the last Assembly, had just Views of the Synod's Sentence, and of the Assembly's Act affirming the same, when they conceived that it laid a Restraint upon Ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness in testifying against the Act 1732, and the like Defections of this Church.

The *Narraters*, p. 11. *ad finem*, say, " We are confident that these Brethren will be sensible that there is nothing in the Sentence contrary to the Word of God, or our received Rules of judging; at least in all the Conferences that were held with them, they never produced any Argument of Weight to prove any such Thing."

The Brethren own, that none of the Arguments they advanced have had Weight to stop the violent Measures; yet, in the Conferences that were held with them, they offered such Arguments as they judged were sufficient for vindicating their condemn'd Conduct, and which they thought might have prevailed with the Managers to have advised the Matter more deliberately before they had pushed Things to the last Extremity. The Reasons that they offered in the several Conferences held with them are contained in their *Representations* published sometime ago; and the World may judge what Weight there is in them to prove that the several Sentences that have been pass'd against the protesting Brethren are contrary to the Word of God, and our received Forms and Rules of Judging. The *Narrative* adds, " These very Brethren who dissented (*viz.* Mr. Moncrieff and Mr. Wilson) and other worthy Brethren who adhered to them, — were some of

“ them so conscious of the Synod’s Lenity, that they
 “ declared, that, if they had thought that the Synod
 “ designed no more but to give Mr. *Erskine* a Re-
 “ buke, they would not have dissented; *Nar.* p. 12.
 That this is not Matter of Fact, we can very well
 instruct. The Sentence of the Synod rebuking Mr.
Erskine was passed in *October* 1732; and, at the
 Synod that met at *Stirling*, *April* 1733, after the
 dissenting Brethren had six Months to advise the
 Matter, they reclaimed against censuring Mr. *Er-*
skine, for the above-mentioned Reasons amongst
 others: And their Reasons of Dissent were given
 in to the Synod, signed by seven of their Num-
 ber; *True State*, p. 53, 58. As for the other five
 dissenting Ministers, we have good Ground to af-
 firm that they would have signed the Reasons of
 Dissent, if they had been present at that Meeting
 of Synod.

The *Narraters*, p. 19. alledge, “ That Mr.
 “ *Wilson* and *Moncrieff* having dissented from the
 “ Sentence of the Synod of *Perth*, should have,
 “ according to the Nature and Design of a Dis-
 “ sent, rested contented with what they had done
 “ till the superior Judicatory had taken it under
 “ their Consideration.” But, is not every Dissent
 in its own Nature a Complaint upon the Judica-
 tory from whence it is made, for some Injury (in
 the Dissenter’s Opinion) done either to a particu-
 lar Person, or the whole Church, or both? And
 this Dissent being of such an extensive Nature,
 would it not have been a Piece of material Justice
 in the Assembly to have enquired into the Rele-
 vancy of the Arguments by which they supported
 such an important Charge?

Nay, say the Committee, “ The Assembly all
 “ along wav’d to meddle with them or their Dis-
 “ sent,

“ sent, and was unwilling and averſe to bring them
 “ to an Account for it, or to inflict any Censure
 “ upon them becauſe of it.” But, was the Aſſem-
 bly reſolved to inflict a Censure upon them for
 their Diſſent before they heard it? The Reaſons
 of their Diſſent were never read in open Aſſem-
 bly, nor the two Brethren ſo much as heard upon
 them; and yet the Committee here ſay, “ That
 “ the Aſſembly was unwilling to inflict a Censure
 “ upon them becauſe of it.” Hence it is obvious,
 that, in the Opinion of the Reverend Committee,
 ſuch was the extraordinary Keenneſs of the laſt
 Aſſembly, that they judged the Diſſenters cenſu-
 rable in their own Minds, without hearing the
 Reaſons of their Diſſent. This is ſuch a Reflecti-
 on upon the Wiſdom and Conduct of the Aſſem-
 bly, that it is left to others to judge if the *Narra-*
tive-Writers have not ſhown as little Regard to
 that Aſſembly, as it is alledged the proteſting Bre-
 thren have done; and indeed this arbitrary Proce-
 dure, which the Committee charge upon the
 Aſſembly, was one of the Reaſons why the two
 Brethren found themſelves obliged to adhere to Mr.
Erskine’s Proteſt, which yet, the Committee ſay,
 was “ A Declaration of War againſt the Church,
 “ without any Call to it.” As they have good
 Reaſon to reſuſe, that a Proteſtation for their juſt
 Right and Privilege to teſtify againſt the Deſecti-
 ons of a prevailing Party in a Church, is a Decla-
 ration of War againſt her, but rather a Service
 done her; ſo they had a very clear Call to enter
 ſuch a Proteſtation: For, were they not *in cauſa*
 by their Diſſent? And, was the mere Deciſion of
 the Aſſembly a ſufficient Answer to all the Reaſons
 thereof, which yet the Aſſembly never conſide-
 red? And therefore, had they not a Call, as Mi-
 niſters

nisters of Christ, to assert their Ministerial Freedom at the Bar of the Assembly, by adhering to a Protest to that Purpose, when they were not permitted to do it any other Way? They were not allowed, altho' they demanded it, to exoner themselves upon these Heads before Sentence: And when they did betake themselves to the only remaining Remedy after Sentence, then nothing must save them from the severest Censures of the Church, but an absolute Submission.

After the *Narraters* have spent some *Pages* in searching into the Spring of the Brethrens Adherence to Mr. *Erskine's* Protest, they come at last to find it out, *p. 19. ad fin.* and it is such a surprizing Thought, that we know not if any other could have fallen upon it: "It must not
 " now be difficult (say they) to find out the
 " Reason that has moved these *Brethren* and Mr.
 " *Fisher* to adhere to Mr. *Erskine's* Protestati-
 " on: Can it be any other Thing than to screen
 " and protect Mr. *Erskine* from the Justice of an
 " Assembly, and to intimidate the supreme Court
 " or their Commission to proceed to a higher
 " Censure against a single Brother?" But we may with as little Difficulty affirm, that any who was Witness to the Behaviour of the prevailing Party in that Assembly, and to the Keeness they shewed to censure some Brethren in *Dunfermline* Presbytery, and to their more than ordinary Forwardness to carry on the violent Settlements of Congregations, could scarce expect that the Adherence of three Brethren to Mr. *Erskine* could be able to screen and protect him from the Temper and Humour that was aloft in that *Assembly*; nay, every one of the *protesting* Brethren had the most evident Reason to lay their Account with all the Se-
 verities

verities they afterwards met with. But if the *Narrators* will take the Declaration of the *dissenting Brethren*, as it lies in their *Representation* given in to the Commission that met in *August*, it is as follows ; “ If this Cause had been “ Mr. *Erskine’s* personal Cause, we should have “ been silent, and never opened our Mouths against the Decision of the *General Assembly* ; “ but we judged it a Cause wherein all the Ministers and Members of this Church are very “ nearly concerned, the Decision of the *General Assembly* in this Case being as we thought a plain “ Directory to all the inferior Judicatories of this “ Church, how to behave if any Minister should upon proper Occasions lament from the Pulpit the “ Sinfulness of that Act of Assembly, and of other “ unwarrantable Proceedings of this Church in “ the Settlement of Ministers, then and in this “ Case they must be brought to the Bar of their “ respective Presbyteries, and there they must be “ rebuked and admonished.” And this Declaration must be taken as the true Reason that moved these Brethren to adhere to Mr. *Erskine’s* Protest, unless it can be instructed that there is something in their Conduct contrary to what they had declared.

But, as we can affirm that there has been nothing in their Conduct, since the first Commencement of this Affair, in the least contrary unto the above Declaration ; so it must be an Intruding upon the Prerogative of Him *who searcheth the Heart*, when the *Narrative* pretends to assign any other Reason for this Step that they have taken.

The *Narrative* alledges, *p. 20.* That the Management of the dissenting Brethren “ is a Novel-
“ ty in our Church, and very different from the
“ Con-

“ Conduct of our wise Predecessors, in the Case
 “ of Mr. *John Davidson* Minister at *Preston-*
 “ *pans*, who protested against the Act of Assembly
 “ at *Dundee* 1597 (they should have said 1598)
 “ approving of Ministers to be Commissioners of
 “ Parliament in the Name of the Kirk. Before he
 “ gave in his Protest, it was thought inexpedient that
 “ any should subscribe it but himself; however di-
 “ vers well-affected Ministers, who with him had
 “ left that Assembly, did join with him in subscri-
 “ bing that Protestation when he was landed on
 “ this Side of the Ferry of *Dundee*; yet, when
 “ they came to St. *Andrews* to Mr. *Andrew Mel-*
 “ *vill* and others, it was concluded they should cut
 “ off the Names, and burn them in the Fire, that
 “ so they might avoid a *Schism*.”

It is evident from the Instance the *Narrative*
 gives, that a Protestation against an Act of Assem-
 bly is no *Novelty* in this Church, nor is an Adhe-
 rence to a Protestation taken before an Assembly
 altogether so singular as the *Narrators* would here
 represent: For, when Mr. *Andrew Hunter* pro-
 tested against the Assembly at *Edinburgh* 1586 for
 relaxing Mr. *Patrick Adamson* from the Sentence
 of Excommunication without any Signs of Repen-
 tance, Mr. *Andrew Melvill* (whom they here men-
 tion as perswading other Ministers to withdraw
 their Adherence) and Mr. *Thomas Buchanan*
 adhered to his Protest; *Petry's Ch. Hist. Cent. 16.*
p. 452. And as to the above Story, as it is related
 by the *Narrative*, it differs from the Account Mr.
Calderwood our Historian gives of the Matter.
 Mr. *Calderwood* tells us, Mr. *Davidson's* Protesta-
 tion was signed by Three or Fourscore Ministers,
 and that their Names were cut off when Mr. *David-*
son went to St. *Andrews*; but makes not the least
 In-

Insinuation that the Ministers who signed the Protestation went to St. *Andrews*, or that they consented to the cutting off of their Names, or that this was done by Mr. *McNeill's* Advice, or that it was done to avoid a Schism. And, suppose it were Matter of Fact as the *Narrative* represents it, will it therefore follow, that because the Ministers who signed their Adherence to Mr. *Davidson's* Testimony did desert the Cause, that we should have trod these Paths, and given up with the publick Cause and Testimony that Mr. *Erskine* was engaged in? Nay, we judge, that considering the Justice of the Testimony Mr. *Davidson* gave, and the dismal Consequences to this Church of the Act he protested against, if it were true as it is represented by the *Narrative*, it would stand in our History as a *Monitory* to us, not to tread the Paths of these Ministers who cut off their Names from that seasonable and necessary Protestation.

We have now traced the *Narrative* till we are come to the Sentence of the Assembly appointing their Commission in *August* to suspend us every one from the Exercise of our Ministry, in case we did not retract our Protestation, and declare our Sorrow for the same; and, if we should act contrary to the Sentence of Suspension, empowering and appointing them to proceed to a higher Censure against us: Accordingly the Event is, we were suspended by the Commission in *August*, because we could not retract our Protestation; and we continued still to exercise our Ministry notwithstanding of the said Sentence of Suspension, and therefore the Commission thought fit at their Meeting in *November* last to cast us out from ministerial Communion with them. And, because their Reasonings for the Justice of the several Sentences past against

us, and for our alledged Duty of Submission unto them, are all of a Piece, we shall consider them together; and then make some Reflections on the Account the *Narrative* gives of the Conduct of the several Judicatories towards us, and our Behaviour towards them during the Dependence of this Affair before the Commission.

The Arguments advanced by the *Narrative* for the Justice of the several Sentences passed against us, and to prove the Unwarrantableness of our Non-submission to them, are taken from the Authority of the Church, and the inevitable Disorders and Confusions that must follow if the Supreme Judicatory is not obeyed: And, to support this Argument, some Texts of Scripture are made Use of, as also the best human Authority is said to be produced; and, to press the Argument closser upon us, our Ordination-vows and Engagements are brought against us, and some particular Instances of Submission to severe Sentences are intermixed.

The Argument for our alledged Duty of Submission to the Sentences and Decisions of the supreme Judicatory is everywhere laid by the *Narrative* on the Honour and Authority of the Church. “ The Commission perceiving, that the Honour and Authority of this Church were insulted and boldly attacked by the suspended Brethren; they could not think of betraying or surrendering such important Interests to those that openly invaded them,” *p.* 34. And it is affirmed by the *Narraters*, “ That the Sentence of the supreme Court of the Church should be submitted to by the inferior Judicatories, much more by any particular Minister appealing to them; otherwise Anarchy and Confusion is in-

“ tro-

“ introduced ;” And, “ That the regular Sub-
 “ ordination of Church-judicatories (a main and
 “ essential Part of Presbyterian Government) is
 “ surrendered and betrayed ;” And that “ Non-
 “ submission to the Sentences of the supreme
 “ Court is Rebellion ;” And that thereby “ we
 “ constitute ourselves the supreme Judges on
 “ Earth.” p. 17. It is further alledg’d, That
 “ if the Authority of a General Assembly is not
 “ maintained, our General Assembly will no more
 “ be a Court of Judicature, but a consultative
 “ Meeting for Counsel and Advice,” Page 34.
 And it is affirmed, That our Protestation that
 we entred before the Commission in *August* last,
 concerning the Nullity of any Sentence of Suspen-
 sion that should be execute against us, “ was an
 “ Indignity reflecting on the Assembly, and a
 “ disowning their Power and Authority to make
 “ any such Appointment,” p. 26.

On the above and like Reasonings very much
 Stress is laid by the *Narrative*: And it cannot but
 be very surprizing, that among professed Pro-
 testants, *Church-authority*, without any Limita-
 tion, should be so much insisted upon ; and that
 the Doctrine of *passive Obedience* and *Non-resi-*
stance, with respect to Ecclesiastical Decisions and
 Sentences, should be so much extolled amongst us:
 And therefore we shall here make the following
 Observations with respect to Church Power and
 Authority, and the Duty of Submission to the Ju-
 dicatories of the Church.

imo, All the Authority that is in any Ecclesiastical
 Judicatory is a subordinate, limited and ministerial
 Power and Authority ; this is a Protestant, as well
 as a Presbyterian Principle. The Judicatories of
 the Church have no Authority for *Destruction*,

but only for the *Edification* of the Body of Christ ; they can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. And, as every Church-judicatory is limited in all their Sentences and Decisions by the Word of God as the supreme Rule and Standard, *Isa.* viii. 20. so any reformed Church that has received and embraced a Sett of Principles agreeable to the Word, and laid them down in a Confession of Faith, or in Ecclesiastical Acts and Constitutions, is limited by these as the subordinate Rule and Standard in all their particular Determinations.

240, The Determinations and Decisions of the Judicatories of the Church ought to be agreeable to the Word of God, and should bear some Evidence and Stamp of their Conformity unto this Rule ; and any well-constitute reform'd Church, if she is not overturning her own Constitution, should evidence her Determinations to be agreeable to these Principles, Acts and Constitutions, which have been received and embraced as agreeable unto the Word of God.

3tio, What we complain of in the present Case is, That, contrary to the above Protestant and Presbyterian Principles, we are dealt with by mere *Church-Authority*. The Act of Assembly 1732 has no Manner of Foundation in the Word of God, even in the Judgment of the *Narrative-Writers* themselves ; for, according to them, the holy Scriptures do not determine who shall be the Electors of Ministers : And when Mr. *Erskine* is brought to the Bar of the Assembly, he pled, That his Doctrine might be tried by the Word of God, and the received Standards of this Church ; But, is this done ? Nay, a Bundle of Propositions, said to be emitted by him, are condemned in Bulk, without

without finding any particular Relevancy ; and he is appointed by mere Authority to be rebuked and admonished, as if he had been a hainous Offender : And when he and his other three Brethren evidently saw that there was an *Embargo* laid upon Ministers by the condemnatory Sentence past against him, and that they were restrained from testifying against the Proceedings of Church-judicatories and Acts of Assembly, however sinful and unwarrantable, and all this by mere Church-authority, they judged themselves obliged to protest for their just Right and Privilege to testify against the Act 1732, and like Defections : And tho' their Protestation acknowledges the Authority of the Judicatories of the Church, and the very Nature of it is only a Protestation for Exoneration, or an attested Declaration against the wrong Exercise of Ecclesiastical Power and Authority ; yet, behold, a *new Act* and *Constitution* comes forth from our General Assembly, without any Precedent in any of our approved Acts of Assembly, whereby the protesting Brethren are appointed to be suspended, and a higher Censure to be inflicted upon them in case they do not obey the Suspension. This is an Act and Sentence that upon the Matter is designed to cut off all legal Testimonies against any Acts of Assembly, how dangerous soever they may be. If Ministers shall enter a Protestation for their own Exoneration against a sinful Act or Decision of the Assembly, they must lay their Account with it to be suspended ; and, if they cannot obey the Sentence of Suspension, they must expect to be cast out from Ministerial Communion with what is reckoned the established Church : And in all this there is nothing but mere Church-authority, without any Evidence that this new Act or

Constitution has any Foundation on the Word of God, or the received and approved Principles of the Church of *Scotland*.

When the Cause of the protesting Brethren was before the Commission in *August*, they pled by their *Representations*, and *viva voce*, That their Doctrine and Practice, and their *Deed of Protesting*, for their own Exoneration, against the Sentence of the last Assembly, might be tried by the Word of God, and by the Acts and Constitutions of the Church of *Scotland*; and, if found contrary to these, they were willing to suffer: Yea, they were so open and fair, as to tell the Commission before the Sentence of Suspension was execute, That if they were laid under that Sentence by mere Authority, when convicted of nothing contrary unto the Word of God, or the Constitutions of this Church; in this Case the express Command of God, to *fulfil the Ministry which they had received from him*, would lay them under a Necessity of disobeying the Sentence of Suspension; yea, they judged it their Duty to protest, That any such Sentence should be held and reputed as null and void in itself, in 'regard they were not convicted of any Thing in Doctrine or Practice contrary to the received Principles of this Church, or their Ordination-vows and Engagements, but on the contrary were sentenced to Censure by the late Assembly for protesting against a Decision whereby they were brought under new and unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial Communion, which were inconsistent with the Word of God and their Ordination-vows and Engagements; as their *Representations* already published do more fully bear. But, says the *Narrative*, This is an Indignity that reflects on the Assembly,

as disowning their Power and Authority to make any such Appointment. To which it is replied, That the above Protestation disowns an absolute and illimited Power and Authority in the General Assembly ; and this is no Indignity reflecting on any Judicatory on Earth : And, in the mean Time, the said Protestation owns a Power and Authority in our General Assembly, limited according to the Word of God, our received Principles, and our Ordination-vows and Engagements ; and this is all the Authority that any of our Judicatories can justly claim.

The *Narrative* is indeed very fair, when it gives the Reason why one of our *Representations* was not read by the Commission ; for, say the *Narrators*, p. 23. " All that could be advanced in these
 " Papers was to no Purpose, unless they did con-
 " tain a Retraction of their Protest, and a De-
 " claration of their Sorrow for giving it in ; and
 " they were told that the Commission were not to
 " sit and hear the Acts of Assembly impugned by
 " their Papers, being expressly tied down to judge at
 " this Meeting (*viz.* in *August*) according to the
 " Assembly's Appointment." That is, right or wrong, the Sentence of Suspension must be execute ; and tho' the protesting Brethren had offered the most convincing Arguments and the strongest Reasons why they could not retract their Protestation, yet the Commission were not to regard them. If this is agreeable to Protestant and Presbyterian Principles, let the World judge : And when the one Half of the Synods of *Scotland*, with two Presbyteries, did address the Commission at their Meeting in *November*, most of them for a Delay of further Procedure against the suspended Brethren, and others for Lenity and Forbearance

towards them, yet all was to no Purpose if the Protestation is not retracted ; the Assembly must be obeyed, and a higher Censure must be inflicted on the suspended Brethren. It is true, when the Question was put, *Proceed to a higher Censure, or delay it till March?* the Votes were found to be equal on both Sides ; and Mr. *John Goldie* the Moderator thought fit to give the Decision on the Side of proceeding at that Time to a higher Censure ; but this was an Evidence that the one Half of the Commission thought they had proceeded far enough in this Affair already.

4^{to}, We observe, That, as all Church Power and Authority is limited by the Word of God as the supreme Rule, and by such Principles and Constitutions as are received by a well-constitute Church agreeable to the Word, as the subordinate Rule ; so that Obedience and Submission which the Ministers and Members of a Church are obliged to give unto the Judicatories thereof, is a limited and qualified Submission. If our Submission is not regulated by the Word of God, and received Principles and Constitutions agreeable thereto, it is nothing but that blind Superstition and ignorant Devotion which obtains amongst the Members of the Church of *Rome*, who give an implicate Obedience to the Decisions of the *Pope* and his *Council*. To apply this to the present Case ; When the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling*, and after them the General Assembly, condemned a Bundle of Propositions as censurable, without finding any of the particular Propositions to be contrary unto the Word of God or our approved Standards, and when the solemn Censure of Rebuke and Admonition was pronounced against Mr. *Erskine* for emitting the same : As all this was done by mere Authority, so we could not

not but testify against the Decision, as restraining us from declaring from the Pulpit on proper Occasions against the Sinfulness of the Act of Assembly 1732, and the Unwarrantableness of the present Proceedings of our Judicatories, whereby the Heritage and Flock of God are oppressed, contrary to the Word of God, and our received Principles and Constitutions agreeable thereto. And when the Assembly appointed their Commission to suspend us, if we should not retract our Protestation against the foresaid Sentence and Decision; As this was also done by mere Authority, seeing it is not so much as alledged in their Sentence, that our Protestation, either as to the Matter or Form of it, was contrary to any of the received Principles or approved Rules of the Church of *Scotland*; so we could not give in to the Retraction demanded by the Assembly, for the many weighty Reasons we have offered in our several *Representations* given in to the Commission in *August* last. And when the Commission at their foresaid Meeting refused to regard any Reasons or Arguments that could be offered against suspending us from the Exercise of our Ministry, and accordingly did execute the Sentence of Suspension past by the Assembly against us; As we could not, in a Consistency with our Duty to God and his Flock, and our Ordination-Vows and Engagements, refrain from the Exercise of our Ministry upon the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of Men; so we could not, in our present circumstantiated Case, yield Obedience to the foresaid Sentence of Suspension, in Regard we had protested for our just Rights and Privileges to testify upon all proper Occasions against the Act 1732, and the like Defections of this Church: And, if we had yielded
to

to a total Silence from the Discharge of our Ministerial Calling, this might have been justly reckoned a giving-up with our *Testimony* altogether.

Let us now see how the Reverend Committee state the Case with Respect unto the Authority of the Judicatories of the Church, and Submission thereunto: "The Case (say they, *p.* 46.) in the " narrowest View of it, comes to this, That the " four Brethren cannot shew or prove that the " Assembly or Commission are in an Error; and " these Judicatories on the other Hand are not so " successful in their Endeavours; as to convince " these Brethren that they are in the Wrong: " Therefore the Point upon which all doth turn " is, Whether the publick Judgment and Sentence of the Church ought to stand, and these " Brethren submit to it? or whether their private " Sentiments shall prevail, and the Church submit to them? The World will now judge which " of the two is most reasonable."

This is the very Way the Question is stated, before the *Pope's* Tribunal, against all the Protestant and Reformed Churches. Ought not (say the Votaries of *Rome*) the publick Judgment and Sentence of the *Catholick Church* to stand? and should not the pretended reformed Churches submit unto it? or shall their private Sentiments prevail, and the Church submit to them? And, do not all the reformed Churches appeal to the Word of God? do they not answer them in the Words of our *Confession*, Chap. i. Sect. 10. "The supreme " Judge, by which all Controversies of Religion " are to be determined, and all Decrees of Councils—are to be examined, and in whose Sentence " we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy " Spirit speaking in the Scriptures?" So say we

to our Managers, We appeal to the Word of God, and to the received and approven Acts and Constitutions of the Church of *Scotland*; let us be tried by them, let us be tried by our *Confession of Faith*, by our *Directory for Worship*, and by our *Propositions concerning Church-Government*, as received and approven by the General Assembly *Anno 1645*; these, next to the Word of God, are the Standards by which we ought to be tried; these are the only Terms of Ministerial Communion amongst us. And, if it is said, Who shall apply the Rule? Is not this what we have craved both at the Bar of the Assembly, and of the Commission, that the Rule might be applied by them? And, is not this what we have complained of, that the several Judicatories have not tried and judged us by the Rule? Let the World now judge whether our Managers or we have acted the most reasonable Part, and which of us are most upon Protestant and Presbyterian Principles.

The *Narrative-Writers*, p. 16. make a Supposition, with which they think to twit us; “Let us suppose (say they) that the Assembly had given their Decision in Favours of Mr. *Erskine*, and against the Synod of *Pertb*, and had acquitted him, and condemned them; and that the Synod had refused to submit, and acted the very same Part that Mr. *Erskine* has done, by protesting against the Assembly, &c. Would not Mr. *Erskine*, and the Ministers his Adherents, and the good People his Admirers, have blamed such a Practice, and exclaimed against the Conduct of such Ministers? &c.” And therefore the *Narrative* infers, “That, if the Sentence of the supreme Court of the Church is not sub-

“ mitted unto, Anarchy and Confusion shall be introduced.”

But we answer, The Case is nowise parallel : For, if the Assembly had condemned the Synod's Conduct, their condemnatory Sentence might have informed the Synod, that they had found Mr. *Erskine* censurable upon a general Relevancy, without condemning any particular Proposition emitted by him, or finding any one Proposition in his Sermon censurable, according to the Word of God; the Acts of our General Assemblies, or universal Custom and Practice in this Church agreeable thereto, as our *Form of Process* expressly requires : In this Case, the Sentence of the Assembly against the Synod had carried its own Evidence in its Bosom ; and the Ministers and Members of this Church would have had good Reason to blame the Practice of the Synod, and to exclaim against their Conduct, if they had refused Submission. And, if this is attended to, that the Acts, Decisions and Sentences of the Judicatories of the Church, should carry some Evidence in them of their Agreeableness to the Word of God and our received Principles and Rules of Judging, all the Smoke that the *Narrative* raises about the Anarchy and Confusion, that shall be introduced from a *Non-submission* to the Sentences of Judicatories, would soon vanish.

If it is still alledged, That Mr. *Erskine* and the protesting Brethren fly in the Face of the Authority of the Church expressed in the Act of Assembly 1732, and in such Proceedings of the Judicatories as are in Consequence of the same ; Let us make one Observe more, and it is, That, in the Judgment of the *Narrative-Writers*, *The holy Scriptures seem not to determine who shall be the*
Electors

*Elector*s of *Ministers*; therefore, according to them, the Act of Assembly 1732 is only a human Constitution. And it is what cannot be controverted, that not only we, but a considerable Body of the *Ministers* and *Members* of this Church, are fully perswaded that the foresaid Act of Assembly, and the Settlement of *Ministers* thereupon, is both sinful and unwarrantable; and their Reasons for judging so have been published oftner than once unto the World. Therefore we enquire, If it is lawful and warrantable to impose a Constitution (which in the Judgment of the Imposers is only human) upon a Body of *Ministers* and Church-members, who are perswaded that it is sinful and unlawful? This we are able to prove is contrary to the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made his People free, and that it is contrary to the End and Design of that Authority that is committed to the Office-bearers of the Church, and a Lording it over the Heritage and Flock of God, and a Ruling them with Rigour; and if our *Narrative-Writers* or their Friends will undertake to prove, that a human Constitution, such as they must acknowledge the Act 1732 to be, may be wreathed about the Necks of *Ministers* and Church-members, who are perswaded that it is unlawful and unwarrantable, they will undertake what no Protestant before them has, so far as we know, ever attempted, except *Bancroft* and *Laud*, and such *English* High-fliers, zealous Persecutors of their Protestant Brethren.

If it is said, That the Act 1732 is not wreathed about our Necks, in Regard we “ are not (as the “ *Narrative* bears, p. 42.) required to renounce “ our Judgment concerning the said Act, nor are “ we bound up from reasoning in a decent and be-

“ coming Manner against it, when in Judicatories
 “ we may be called to judge of controverted Calls,
 “ and that the Press is free to us to impugn the
 “ said Act with all the Strength of Reason we are
 “ Masters of.” We have Reason to bless the
 Lord, that we live not under an arbitrary Civil Go-
 vernment, and therefore the *Press* is open to us :
 And tho’ our Church-judicatories are not come
 the Length of the *Spanish Inquisition*, to oblige
 us to renounce our Judgment about the Act, or
 to bind us up from reasoning against it ; yet, is it
 not wreathed about the Necks of the Ministers
 and Members of this Church, when our Congre-
 gations must be settled according to the Order pre-
 scribed therein, and when Ministers, however
 convinced of the Sinfulness and dangerous Ten-
 dency of it, must not open their Mouths from the
 Pulpit against it, or the Proceedings of our Judi-
 catories in the violent Settlement of Ministers,
 without incurring the Censure of Rebuke and Ad-
 monition, yea, and of Suspension too, if they will
 not be silent ?

Now, to conclude this Head, Since the several
 Sentences passed against us do flow from mere
 Church-authority, and since there is no Evidence
 or Document brought against us, that we have
 counteracted any of the received or known Prin-
 ciples of the Church of *Scotland* ; and since we
 have always craved that we might be judged and
 tried by the Word of God, and our received and
 approven Standards ; it is evident that we do not
 make ourselves *supreme Judges upon Earth*, and
 that we do not claim to ourselves a *Negative* over
 the whole Church, like *Bishops* and *Arch-bishops*,
 and that we do not in Effect *depose* our *lawful*
Ecclesiastical Superiors, and set ourselves up in
 their

their Room, as is alledg'd against us by the *Narrative*, p. 17, 54. Nay, we hold a Presbyterian, yea a Protestant Principle, asserted and maintained by all the Protestant reformed Churches since their Seceſſion from *Rome*, and laid down in the above-cited Article of our *Confession of Faith*, Chap. 1. Sect. 10.

The *Narrative* argues from the Word of God, That we ought to submit to the Sentences paſt againſt us; the *Remedy* in Caſes of Offence preſcribed in the Word being, to *tell the Church*, Matth. xviii. 17. and the Apoſtolic Direction being, to *submit to them that have the Rule over us*, Heb. xiii. 17. and becauſe a Power of Judging is given to the *Prophets*, and the *Spirit of the Prophets is ſubject to the Prophets*, for this ſtrong Reaſon, That *God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace*, 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 32, 33. *Narrative*, p. 43. The Answer is plain and obvious from what has been ſaid, We are to hear the Church, and obey them that rule over us, and to ſubmit to the Prophets when their Judgment is regulate by the unerring Standard of the Word; *To the Law and to the Teſtimony*, Iſa. viii. 20. otherwiſe no Men *are to be called Maſters*, Matth. xxiv. 10. And, as this is the Doctrine of all the reformed Churches, in Oppoſition to the *Romanists*, who have made Uſe of the ſame very Scriptures to eſtabliſh the abſolute and illimited Authority of the POPE and his *Council*, and to oblige all to an implicate Obedience unto them; ſo it is the Doctrine of this Church, in her firſt *Confession of Faith*, Article 20. “ As we do not raſhly condemn that which godly Men, aſſembled together in general Councils lawfully gathered, have propoſed unto us; ſo without juſt Examination
“ dare

“ dare we not receive whatsoever is obtruded unto
 “ Men under the Name of General Councils : For
 “ plain it is, that, as they were Men, so have
 “ some of them manifestly erred, and that in Mat-
 “ ters of great Weight and Importance. So far
 “ then as the Council proveth the Determination
 “ and Commandment that it giveth by the plain
 “ Word of God, so soon do we embrace and reve-
 “ rence the same; but, if Men, under the Name
 “ of a Council, pretend to forge unto us new Ar-
 “ ticles of our Faith, or to make Constitutions re-
 “ pugning to the Word of God, then utterly
 “ we must refuse the same as the Doctrine of De-
 “ vils, which draweth our Souls from the Voice
 “ of our only God, to follow the Doctrines and
 “ Constitutions of Men.” The very same Doctrine
 is contained in our *Westminster Confession of Faith*,
 Chap. 20. § 2. Chap. 31. § 3, 4.

The *Narrative* alledges the best human Eccle-
 siastick Authority for supporting their Assertion,
 and, amongst others, the reformed Church of
France, Eccles. Dis. Chap. 5. § 29. But in the
 Place cited we find neither the Words repeated by
 the *Narrative*, nor any Thing to the Purpose ;
 but the 32^d Canon of that Chapter determines,
 That “ a Pastor or Elder breaking the Church’s
 “ Union, or stirring up Contention about any
 “ Point of Doctrine, or of the Discipline which
 “ he had subscribed, or about the Form of Cate-
 “ chizing, Administration of the Sacraments,
 “ Common Prayers, and the Celebration of Mar-
 “ riage, and not conforming to the Determination
 “ of the Collogy (*i. e.* the Presbytery) he shall
 “ then be suspended from his Office, and shall be
 “ further prosecuted by the Provincial or Natio-
 “ nal Synod.” But this is so far from suppor-
 ting

ting the Assertion of the *Narrative*, that it plainly supports us ; in regard it has never been alledged in any of the Sentences past against us, that we have stirred up Contention about any Point of Doctrine or Discipline that we have subscribed, or that we have departed from the received Form and Order of the Administration of the Sacraments, &c.

As to the Reply of the Divines of *South-Holland*, to the Arguments of the *Arminians* against Submission to the Decision of a Synod when it is wrong, because the Members thereof are fallible Men ; the *Narrative* makes not a very fair Representation of the Case. Any Body that looks the Place, and compares the *Reply*, and the *Exceptions* of the *Arminians* together, will find, that the *Arminians* refuse to have their Doctrine tried and judged by the received *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, and that they excepted against the Constitution of the Synod, and alledged, That their Judges had already made themselves Parties in the Question amongst them, by preaching against them and otherwise. To this the Divines of *South-Holland* reply, *Si hec remonstrantium exceptio*, &c.

“ If this Exception of the Remonstrants should
 “ hold, no Ecclesiastical Censure or Discipline
 “ can at any Time be exercised against such as are
 “ scandalous in Doctrine or Practice : For they
 “ will always resist their Judges, Presbyteries or
 “ Synods, *as Parties.*” This last Clause, *as Parties*, the *Narrative* thinks fit to leave out, and they lay their Testimony as if they would have us to believe that the Divines of *South-Holland* in the Synod of *Dort* pled for an absolute and unlimited Submission to their Sentence and Decrees ; whereas in the same very Place quoted by the Committee

mittee they assert the quite contrary, "*Contra autem, &c.* But (say they) upon the other Hand, whosoever are called to a *national Synod*, are not tied down to human Decrees or Writings, but to the Word of God only ; so that, if there be any Thing in our *Confession* which is not agreeable to the Word of God, they (*viz.* the Remonstrants) are not only permitted, but it is a Duty necessarily incumbent on them, to examine and amend it by the unerring Rule of the Word of God." And what a vast Difference is there betwixt the Case of the Remonstrants before that Synod and ours? They refused to have their Doctrine tried by the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of the *Belgick Churches* ; but we have always craved, that, next to the Word of God, we may be tried and judged by our approved Standards of Doctrine and Discipline : The *Remonstrants* shifted the Trial, and declined their Judges as *Parties* ; but we have always been willing to ly open to a fair Trial according to the approved Acts and Constitutions of the Church of *Scotland*.

The third Authority advanced by the *Narrative* is the Judgment of the Church of *Scotland*, from Act of Assembly 1648, Sect. 30. Ordaining, " That if any suspended Minister, during the Suspension, shall exercise any Part of the ministerial Calling, he shall be deposed." The same very Act was thrown up to the *Protesters*, who after the Year 1650 continued to exercise their ministerial Office notwithstanding of Sentences of *Suspension* and *Deposition* past against them ; and they pled, That the above Act of *Assembly* must be understood of such Sentences as are past according to the *Word of God*, and the received and
ap

approven *Rules and Constitutions* of this Church ;
 otherwise the Meaning of it (say they) must be,
 " Whatsoever Minister, justly or unjustly, and
 " contrary to the Rule of the Word of God,
 " suspended from his Ministry, shall continue to
 " preach the Gospel : — — We the General As-
 " sembly of the Kirk of *Scotland* do appoint,
 " That because of his Disobedience to our Sen-
 " tence, whether just or unjust, he shall be de-
 " posed: — — But, as we abhor to fasten such a
 " Meaning upon that reverend and grave Assembly,
 " so we desire to think that our Brethren, upon
 " sober and serious Thoughts, will abhor it also,
 " and will acknowledge with us, that it is to be
 " understood of just Sentences only," &c. See
Protesters no Subverters, p. 52, 53. This Apo-
 logy the Protesters make for themselves, contains
 a sufficient Answer for us to the above Act of As-
 sembly that is brought against us.

The last Author they mention is the Testimony
 of the learned and pious Mr. *Durham* on the
Revelation: They have not told us what Edition
 of that Book they make Use of, and therefore we
 could not fall upon the Place ; but, if the Reader
 will consider what we have already advanced for
 justifying our Conduct, he will find, that there is
 nothing in our Practice contrary to the Testimony
 of the learned and pious Mr. *Durham*, even as it
 is cited by them. And, since our *Narrative-*
Writers profess such a Regard for that great Di-
 vine, we wish they would seriously consider what
 he lays down in his excellent Treatise on *Scandal*,
 Part 2. Chap. 2. concerning the Order that is to be
 kept in following of *publick Scandals* : And, a-
 mongst other judicious Rules, this is one that he
 mentions ; " That no Censure would be blindly

“ or implicitly made Use of, but, both in Reference to the Party and others, there would be “ Instruction, Exhortation, Conviction, &c. by “ the Word, going before or alongst with the “ same.” If this Rule had been observed in our Case, our Managers had not driven Matters as they have done.

The next Argument advanced by the *Narrative* for our Submission to the several Sentences past against us, is taken from our Ordination Vows and Engagements, which oblige us to submit to the Government and Discipline of the Church, and that we shall never endeavour, directly or indirectly, the Prejudice or Subversion of the same. We have made it evident from our several *Representations* given in to the Commission, that our Ordination Vows and Engagements oblige us to the several Steps we have taken; and the Charge of counteracting Ordination Vows and Engagements may be more justly laid at their Door, who are imposing Ministers upon dissenting Congregations, and appointing Committees, with a Presbyterian Power, to try and ordain Men for the Office of the holy Ministry, and thereby depriving Presbyteries of their inherent Right and Privilege, when they cannot concur with them in intruding Ministers upon the Congregations concerned: These, and the like Measures pursued at present by our Managers, have the most direct Tendency to subvert our Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline.

The *Narrative* makes not a very fair Representation of our Case, when they say (*Narrative*, p. 45.) “ That, to evade this heavy Charge and Accusation, we alledge that we have only promised Submission in the Lord.” Will the Reverend

rend Committee say, That it is an absolute and illimited Subjection to the Judicatories that any are engaged unto; and that, whatever Acts and Constitutions are made by a Majority, under the Name of a General Assembly, tho' they should strike at our Constitution, we must be silent, and not testify, either doctrinally or by Protestation, against them? Therefore, when we say, That our Submission to Judicatories is in the Lord, we mean, that it is according to the Word of God, and our received and approved Standards of Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline: These are the only Terms of Ministerial Communion amongst us; and we refuse that we have broken through any of them: We appeal to the several Sentences past against us, if this is so much as laid to our Charge. Will the Reverend *Narraters* say, That it is contrary to Presbyterian Principles for one to protest for his own Exoneration against a particular Act, Sentence or Decision of a General Assembly, affecting the publick Cause and Interest? We are sure, it is a Protestant Principle, that, in some Cases too, it is warrantable and Duty so to do. The *Narraters* alledge, *p.* 46. " That we beg the Question, when we say, That we are not bound by " our Ordination Vows and Engagements to submit to unjust Sentences and Censures." This is another unfair Account of what we have said. Our *Representations* given in to the Commission in *August* bear, That we could not submit to a Sentence of Suspension, in regard we were not convicted of departing from any of the received Principles of this Church, or of counteracting our Ordination Vows and Engagements; and, is this a begging of the Question? The *Narrative* has not affirmed that we are convicted of any such Thing:

They have told us in general, That we have broken these Bands afunder, *viz.* our Ordination Vows and Engagements ; but, have they advanced any Proof of this general Charge ? No, they have not done it, and we hope, through the Lord's Grace, they shall never be able to do it.

Before we pass this Head, we must observe, That the *Narrative* pleads for our Submission to the several Sentences, and that, " Because the Submission required was not a Decision in Matters of Doctrine or Worship, nor a Submission of their Judgment in a debatable Point, but only in Matters of Church-discipline, with respect to Censures of Rebuke and Suspension," *p.* 43. And that, " Tho' the forelaid Censures were unjust, yet these being in a Matter that does not affect, and much less overthrow, the Doctrine, Worship or Government of this Church in any Point, but is purely a Matter of Discipline, Submission should have been given : " And, " That it is the Judgment of all moderate Divines, that Reverence is due to a Church, even mistaking and erring in lesser Matters, &c.," *p.* 47.

To which we answer, That granting that Submission is due unto a Church sometimes, when mistaking and erring in lesser Matters (tho' we cannot allow it as a general Rule, that absolute Submission and illimited Obedience ought to be given at all Times, even in lesser Points) yet the Submission required of us respects such Sentences wherein our Constitution is very nearly concerned. If the Reverend *Narrators* will be ruled in this Question by the Judgment of all *moderate Divines*, have they not reckoned, that the Election of Church-officers is a principal Thing in the external Admi-

Administration of the Kingdom of Christ in this World? The *Narraters* will not refuse, that there have been considerable Debates even amongst *moderate Divines* on the Question, and that the contending Parties have pled Divine Authority on their Side: This is an Evidence that they have looked upon this Matter as nearly affecting the Constitution of the Church. As for Instance, some have pled Divine Authority for the Right of Election in the congregational Eldership; others have pled Divine Authority for the Right of Election in the People of every several Congregation: And the Author of the *modest and humble Enquiry* (who is no doubt reckoned in the Class of *moderate Divines* by the *Narraters*) pleads Divine Authority for the Right of Election in the classical Presbytery. It is true, the two former Sett of Divines are agreed, that a Minister ought not to be imposed upon a dissenting and reclaiming People; and so the Difference is neither considerable nor material amongst them: But the Author of the *modest and humble Enquiry*, tho' he placeth the Divine Right of Election of Ministers in the Presbytery, yet he has no Difficulty to make a Compliment of the Settlement of Parishes to *Patrons* or *disaffected Heritors*.

Besides, as all moderate Divines have reckoned the Election of Church-officers a Thing very essential unto the Constitution of the Church; so, if we consider the Church as a Society, having its peculiar and distinct Privileges, as well as any other Society; Is it not reckoned an essential Point in the Constitution of any Civil Society, who shall choose their Magistrates and Officers? And, is it not of as great Importance and Moment to the Church, who shall choose her Pastors and Overseers? And, can
it

it be thought, that an Act of Assembly that delivers up the Settlement of Congregations into the Hands of *Heritors, even not residing and disaffected*, does not at all affect our Constitution? Or, do the Proceedings of the Commission, whereby they deprive Presbyteries of that inherent Right that belongs unto them by the Word of God and the Acts of this Church, *viz.* the Trial and Ordination of Men for the Office of the holy Ministry, when they cannot concur with violent Intrusions; do these, we say, nowise strike at our Presbyterian Constitution? It is true, the *Narrators* alledge, That the holy Scriptures do not determine who shall be the Electors of Ministers: But, as we have already observed the Absurdity of this, so the *Narrative-Writers* make but a very lame Apology for the Assembly 1732, when they say, p. 49. "That the Assembly judged "their Act would be most taking and pleasing to the "Generality of all Sorts of Persons in this Church." Is the pleasing of Men a sufficient Reason for a Church-Act of such Importance and Consequence? Does our Church now follow the Pattern of the first Christian Synod, who emitted their Ecclesiastical Decrees in another Strain, when they said, *It seemeth good unto the holy Ghost and us?* Acts xv. 28. The Reverend Committee, pick'd out by the Commission to *narrate* their Proceedings against us, have thought fit to declare before the World, that the Assembly intended, by their Act, to please the Generality of all Sorts of Persons in this Church: Must the open and avowed Enemies of our Presbyterian Constitution be gratified with the Settlement of Churches, where their Influence and Interest prevails, to the wounding, grieving, oppressing and breaking of a Body of People through the Land, who are firm and sincere Friends unto the same?

Likewise, the Sentences past against us do very much affect even the Doctrine of this Church: This is evident, if we consider the faint Proceedings of our Judicatories against the many doctrinal Errors that have been vented amongst us; and these have no small Tendency to corrupt the Doctrine of this Church, as we have

hinted in our several *Representations* given in to the Commission, and which may be further laid open in due Time.

Upon the Whole, it is plain, that as we protested for our just Right and Privilege to testify against the Act 1732 or the like Defections of this Church, and that because the late Assembly did, by their Act and Sentence, approve of the Proceedings of the Synod of *Perth* appointing Mr. *Erskine* to be rebuked for *impugning Acts of Assembly* and the *Proceedings of our Church-Judicatories*, and as we refused to retract our Protestation in Obedience to the said Assembly; so our Non-submission to these several Sentences is, because they affect our Doctrine, Government and Discipline, and that in a most sensible Manner: And tho', in some private and personal Causes, good Order requires that even an unjust Suspension should be obeyed; yet, in the Case of a publick Testimony for Truth, to submit to a mere authoritative Suspension, is to give up with the Testimony, and to go down with the Current of Defection and Backsliding; and therefore we judged it a Duty incumbent upon us to exercise our Ministry, even when the Sentence of Suspension was execute against us.

Thus we have done with the Reasoning-part of the *Narrative*, and we have not omitted any Thing that appear'd to us to have any Force of Argument in it. The *Narrative* pleads for our Submission to Church-censures, from some particular Instances of Submission given, or required to be given, to severe and unjust Sentences in former Times: The first is, the Case of Mrs. *Andrew Ramsay* and *William Colvill*, Ministers of *Edinburgh*, p. 26. "who (they tell us) were suspended because they
 " had not Clearness about the Sinfulness of the Duke's
 " Engagement, and for not reading the Causes of a
 " Fast upon that Account; yet they never protested
 " against the Sentence, nor offer'd to exercise any Part
 " of their pastoral Office; and, tho' the Assembly 1649
 " proceeded against them to the Sentence of Deposition,
 " they never attempted it till the Sentence was
 " taken of." But, that the World may not be impos-

sed

fed upon, nor a Reflection rubb'd on the Memory of two famous *Assemblies*, we shall briefly set this Story in a fair Light. The Commission of the General Assembly, *Anno* 1647, having been unsuccessful in their *Remonstrances* and *Petitions* against the Engagement in a War with *England*, appointed a Fast, amongst other Reasons, upon the Account of the Unlawfulness of the said Engagement, as being a *sinful Association* with Malignants, for bearing down the Uniformity sworn to by the three Kingdoms : But Mrs. *Ramsay* and *Colvil* refused to observe the Fast upon these Grounds. And, when the Matter came before the Assembly 1648, they emitted a solemn *Testimony* and *Declaration* against the said Engagement, wherein they lay open the Sinfulness of it from the Word of God, and prove it to be a manifest Breach of every Article of the Oath of God, sworn by the three Kingdoms ; as the Declaration itself, Assembly 1648. *Sess.* 21. fully bears. Notwithstanding of this Declaration, supported by many weighty and strong Reasons, the above two Ministers could not be brought to a Sense of their Duty ; therefore that Assembly laid them under a Sentence of Suspension, as joining with, and strengthening the Hands of the Enemies of the covenanted Uniformity : And for the same Reason the Assembly 1649 deposed them from the Office of the Ministry ; The said Assembly having also declared the Engagement in the War with *England* to be contrary to the *Word of God*, the *Solemn League and Covenant*, and destructive to Religion, Assembly 1649. *Sess.* 19. As this is the Case with Respect to the above Ministers ; so, if the Reverend *Narraters* could have said, that the Assembly 1733, and their Commission, did lay us under a Sentence of Suspension, &c. for acting contrary to the Word of God, and our covenanted Reformation, the Case had been somewhat parallel : But, did not the late Assembly proceed against us by mere *Church-Authority*, without evidencing their Decisions to be agreeable to the Word, or the Rules and Constitutions of this Church ? It was otherwise in the two famous Assemblies above-mentioned ;
they

they evidenced the Justice of their Conduct and Practice from the Word of God and our Covenant-Engagements, as may be seen from the above Declarations emitted by them. We shall only add, That these two Ministers being deposed by the Assembly 1649, that Sentence was not taken off but by an Assembly where the Party that declared for the publick Resolutions, suspended and deposed several eminent Ministers of the *protesting* Side, for the same Reasons for which they relaxed Mrs. *Ramsay* and *Colvil* from these Sentences: Therefore, as this Instance does not prove what the Committee designed by it, so they have no great Honour by adducing it; and, tho' they give a large Character of the above two Ministers, yet the Revival of this Story is no great Service done to their Memory.

But we know not to what Purpose the *Narrative* makes mention of Mr. *David Calderwood's* Protestation, p. 27. against the Act of Assembly 1649, anent the Election of Ministers; if it is not that the World may know that Mr. *Calderwood*, who understood Presbyterian Principles as well as any in this Age, did not think it inconsistent with them to protest even against an Act of a General Assembly: As also, that the Assembly 1649, zealous Asserters of our Presbyterian Principles, did not judge it inconsistent with the Maintenance of their just Authority, to inflict no Censure on Mr. *Calderwood* for his Protestation. It is true, the *Narrative* tells us of a Letter from Mr. *Baillie* Principal of the College of *Glasgow* to Mr. *Spang*, wherein it is said, That, if this Protestation had come from any other, he had not escaped Censure: But, as this Letter has not been heard of these *Fourscore Years* till of late, so we have much Ground to doubt if it is genuine; especially because it alledges, as the *Narrative* bears, "That this Protestation was not because that Act excluded the People, but because the Right and Power was not lodged in the Hands of the Presbytery." Which is contrary to Mr. *Calderwood's* Sentiments in his *Altare Damasc.* published by himself; see p. 6, 7, 8. of that Book.

The other Instance the *Narrative* gives is the Case of Mr. *James Morison*, suspended by the Presbytery of *Kirkwall*: And, tho' he appealed to the Assembly 1649, yet he continued to exercise his Ministry, for which the Presbytery did afterwards depose him; yet, adhering to his Appeal, he went on and preached. And that, when the Cause came before the Assembly, they condemned the Presbytery's Procedure, and took off the Sentence of Deposition; yet that they rebuked Mr. *Morison* for Contempt and Disobedience, for preaching after he was laid under the above Sentences, *Narrative*, p. 48.

But it is plain, the Sentence of the Presbytery against Mr. *Morison* was not final; he had Access to appeal to the *General Assembly*: This is not our Case; A final Sentence was past against us by the late Assembly. Likewise, Mr. *Morison's* Case, for any Thing that appears, was a private personal Cause; so is not ours: A Sentence was past against us in a Cause of a very publick Nature, wherein the Maintenance of a Testimony to Truth, and against a Current of Defection, is nearly concern'd. But, passing these, this very Case was objected to the Protesters, who continued to exercise their Ministry, notwithstanding of Sentences of Suspension and Deposition past against them; and they refuse that the General Assembly did rebuke Mr. *Morison* for preaching after he was laid under the above Sentences, and they appeal to the Registers, *Protesters no Subverters*, p. 54.

What remains to be considered is the Account the *Narrative* gives of the Conduct of the Judicatories towards the protesting Brethren, and of their Behaviour towards them: And there are almost as many Misrepresentations as there are Matters of Fact related. To enquire into every Particular, would weary the Reader; we shall only name one or two. P. 21. after the Act and Sentence of the Assembly, appointing us to be suspended, is narrated; the *Narrative* bears, "This Act
" may look like Severity against the four protesting
" Brethren; yet, considering the Indulgence shown
" them in appointing so many Conferences, and Conde-
" scensions made to them in the whole of the Assem-
" bly's

“bly’s Conduct; — every Body must be convinced,
 “that their Obstinacy has extorted it from the Assem-
 “bly.” Here there is a manifest Imposition upon the
 World, as if there had been a great many Conferences
 held, and Condescensions made to us, during the sit-
 ting of the last Assembly : For, before the passing of the
 Sentence of Assembly against us, there was not a Con-
 ference held with us but one ; and in that Conference
 there was not the least Condescension proposed ; the
 Protestation behoved to be retracted, else nothing could
 save us from Censure. And, as for the Lenity of the
 Assembly’s Sentence, we think the Committee might
 have spared that ; for they could scarce well conceive
 any Thing beyond *Suspension* and *higher Censure*. But,
 say the Committee, It was extorted from the Assembly.
 But, what is the Meaning of an *extorted Sentence* ? Was
 it drawn out by Violence ? Is Obstinacy of Judgment,
 Violence ? Or, was such Obstinacy of Judgment to be
 overcome by a violent Sentence ? Is this the Church’s
 Method of convincing Consciences ? May not the Ar-
 gument be returned, That what they call Obstinacy and
 Perverseness was extorted by the Assembly and Commis-
 sion their abusing the Authority of the Church, in ty-
 rannizing over the Consciences of Men ? And indeed
 their Way of proceeding plainly said, *Rapienda est oc-
 casio* : For the Assembly had it in the Power of their
 Hand to disregard the Protest, according to their usual
 Custom ; but, instead of that, they snatch at it as the
 Foundation of a new and unprecedented Process, altho’
 the Committee are pleased to furnish us with two In-
 stances of Protestations against Assemblies, without any
 Manner of Censure, *viz.* Mr. Davidson’s and Mr. Cal-
 derwood’s, as above.

Again, p. 28. when they give an Account of Mr. Er-
 skine’s Reply to the Question put to him about his Sub-
 mission to the Sentence of Suspension past against him
 in *August* last ; they narrate the Answer in their own
 Way, and seem to infer from it, that he pled an extra-
 ordinary and an immediate Mission to the Work of the
 Ministry. But, as all the Brethren did very ingenu-
 ously

ously own before the Commission, that they had exercised all the Parts of their Ministerial Office, as if no such Sentence had been inflicted upon them; so the Reasons that any of them offered for their doing so, were very consistent with their Protestation, which was enter'd before the executing of the Sentence of Suspension upon them, and which is now publish'd in their several *Representations*, and has been oftner than once mentioned in this Paper. All the protesting Brethren own, that their Mission to the Work of the Ministry is *mediate*, they pretend to no inward Call to thrust themselves into the Ministry without authoritative Mission from a Presbytery; yet they deny, that their Authority as Ministers of Christ (which seems to be the Argument of the *Narrative*, p. 29.) is from Men; and they affirm, That the Judicatories of the Church are only the Chancel through which their Authority from Christ, as his *Ministers* and *Ambassadors*, doth flow; or, they are only the interveening Means of the Conveyance of that Power and Authority for the Work and Office of the Ministry, which is derived, not from Men, but from the Lord *Jesus* himself: And this they judge is the Doctrine of the reform'd Churches, and of the Spirit of God in his own Word, *Acts* xx. 28. *2 Cor.* v. 20. Therefore they are perswaded, that as no Judicatory of the Church can by their mere arbitrary Will and Pleasure unminister them, so they cannot warrantably deprive them of the Power and Authority that they have from Christ to exercise their Ministry, as *Ministers* of the *respective Congregations* to which they bear a pastoral Relation, unless they are convicted of something in Doctrine or Practice that renders them unworthy of that sacred Trust: Hence, if they are discharged to exercise their Ministry, on the Account of their Testimony against any prevailing Evils or Defections in a Church, it may give them Courage and Boldness to continue in the Discharge of their Duty, that they hold their Office of Him, who is given to be the Head over all Things to the Church. These are the Prin-

Principles of the Four protesting Brethren on this Head; and, if any think fit to attack them, they hope they shall be able to defend the same.

The *Narrative* aggravates the Disobedience of the protesting Brethren, from the great Pains that were taken upon them at the several Meetings of the Commission. 'Tis true, Committees were appointed to commune with them; but still the retracting of their Protestation was insisted upon, and this they had never Freedom to yield unto: Yea, they were frequently told, That the Acts of our Assemblies, and the Proceedings of Church-judicatories, must not be spoken against from the Pulpit; and this was a Silence they could never submit unto, especially when the present Current of Defection and Backsliding is so strong. There was never any Thing that had the least Appearance of a Condescension proposed unto them, till the Night before the Commission gave their final Sentence, when a Committee of the Commission made two different Proposals unto them; but some Objections being made against the first, it was not insisted upon, therefore there is no Need to insert it here. The second Proposal that was made to them is as follows.

“ If the next General Assembly shall declare, that
 “ it was not meant by the Act of the last Assembly
 “ to deny or take away the Privilege and Duty of Ministers to testify against Defections; then we shall
 “ be at Liberty, and willing to withdraw our Protest
 “ against the said Act of Assembly: And particularly,
 “ we reserve to ourselves the Liberty of testifying against the Act of Assembly 1732, on all proper Occasions.”

When the above Proposal was made unto the Four Brethren, as it was new unto them, they offered to retire for a short Time, and to return an Answer unto it: But the Committee desired them to take it for that Night under their Consideration; and, in Compliance with the Committee's Desire, they agreed to take it till the next Morning under their Consideration; with this express Declaration, That the Reason of their doing

ing so was, Because it was late, and because at that Time they did not fully understand the Import of it: And the next Morning they made an Answer in Writ to the said Proposal, which is as follows.

“ As to the Proposal made by the Committee to us,
 “ That we should withdraw our Protestation, in case
 “ a subsequent Assembly should declare, That it was
 “ not meant by the Act and Sentence of the last Assembly, in Mr. *Erskine's* Affair, to deny or take away the Privilege and Duty of Ministers to testify against Defections. After serious and mature Deliberation, we have no Freedom to go in to the said Proposal; and that because the obvious Sense and Meaning of the said Act and Sentence appears to us to lay a Restraint on ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness, in testifying against the Act of Assembly 1732, and the like Defections in this Church, upon proper Occasions: And, as this was the Ground of our Protestation, so any Declaration that a subsequent Assembly can make, cannot remove the Ground upon which we protested against the Decision; in regard that an Act and Declaration of the following Assembly, tho' agreeable to the Word of God, can never take away the Ground of protesting against a wrong Decision of a preceeding Assembly.”

Our above Answer contains a sufficient Reason why we could not go in to the Committee's Proposal; but, since the said Proposal has been represented as a very great Condescension unto us, and since our refusing the same is exclaimed against by some as a Piece of very great Stiffness, we shall, for further clearing this Matter, offer the following Observes;

1st, If a subsequent Assembly should declare that it was not meant by the Act and Sentence of the last Assembly, to deny or take away the Privilege and Duty of Ministers to testify against Defections; this appears to us to be a material Repealing of the Act and Sentence of Assembly 1733, condemning Mr. *Erskine*, and consequently a Justifying of our Protestation. And tho' 'tis plain, that an ensuing Assembly can never declare what was the

the Intention and Meaning of the last Assembly in framing the foreſaid Act and Sentence, yet, if a following Assembly ſhould make a Declaration in the Terms propoſed to us, and allow us Liberty to teſtify againſt the Act of Assembly 1732 upon all proper Occaſions, this would be a material Repealing of the Act and Sentence proteſted againſt, in regard the ſaid Act and Sentence in the very obvious Senſe and Meaning of the Words in which it is conceived (as we have already made evident) lays a Reſtraint upon miniſterial Freedom and Faithfulneſs : And in this Caſe, to ſpeak of a retracting of our Proteſtation, would it not have been a falling from our Teſtimony, when the General Assembly by the above propoſed Declaration were upon the Matter approving what we had done ?

2dly, As the Retracting of our Proteſtation was ſtill inſiſted upon, ſo our yielding to retract, upon the Condition propoſed, appeared to us to be a giving-up with a Privilege belonging to the Miniſters of this Church, viz. of exonerating themſelves by Proteſtation againſt a wrong Sentence or Deciſion of the ſupreme Judicatory in an Affair wherein the publick Cauſe is nearly concerned.

3dly, When this Propoſal was made unto us, the Commiſſion were making no Stop to the Current of violent Settlements ; but that ſame very Night they appointed a Committee to ſettle Mr. Renny, the *Preſentee*, in the Pariſh of *Muckhart* ; and that in Oppoſition both to the ſaid Pariſh, and to the Presbytery of *Auchterarder*, who had no Freedom to concur in that Settlement : And we might reaſonably think, that it was not ſafe for us to give up in the leaſt with that Teſtimony that we found ourſelves obliged to give againſt ſuch violent Settlements ; eſpecially when the prevailing Party in the Commiſſion were ſo far from relenting in this Matter, that they were ſtill going on with a high Hand. It has always been reckoned a dangerous Thing to depart in the leaſt from a Teſtimony once liſted up againſt a ſtrong Current of Deſection and Backſliding. It is a judicious Obſerve of that great Divine, Mr. Dur-

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ham, in his Commentary upon *Revelation*, Chap. vi. 9.
 " That these who are sound in the Faith of the
 " Word will be also exceeding tenacious of their Testi-
 " mony. In Scripture and primitive Times we find
 " the Saints sticking at, and hazarding themselves on
 " Things which appear of very small Moment; yet
 " were to them of great Concernment, because of the
 " Testimony which was involved in them, which they
 " would not let go. Such was *Mordecai*, *Esb. iii. Dan. vi.*
 " his not *shutting* of his Windows. When the Persecu-
 " tion of *Dioclesian* began, the Persecutors sought but
 " the Bibles, the Poores Coats, Money, or Cups
 " (wherewith they served) to be given them, as some
 " Evidence of their ceding; but they refused to accept
 " Deliverance upon these Terms; yea, when the Sol-
 " diers——did profess themselves content to take
 " any old Paper in Place of the Bible, they refused to
 " give it." We hope, what is now offered for clearing
 and supporting the Answer we gave to the Committee's
 Proposal, will satisfy such as are unprejudiced, that we
 had just Reason not to comply with what is represented
 to be a very great Condescension to us: And as we are
 still perswaded, that the Act and Sentence of Assembly,
 protested against, does, in the obvious Sense and Mean-
 ing of it, lay a Restraint upon ministerial Freedom and
 Faithfulness; so the above Proposal is an Evidence un-
 to us, that some at least of the Managers themselves
 are under a Conviction that we had too much Ground
 given us for our Conduct, which they had so severely
 condemned and censured.

The Committee having made Report unto the Com-
 mission, That we declined to go in to any Proposal that
 they had offered unto our Consideration; the Commis-
 sion did proceed to their final Sentence against us, where-
 by they loosed our pastoral Relation to our respective
 Parishes, and declared us no longer Ministers of this
 Church; and they did prohibite all the Ministers of
 this Church to employ us in any ministerial Fun-
 ction. When this Sentence was intimate unto us,
 we did protest, That, notwithstanding thereof, " Our
 " pasto-

“ pastoral Relation to our respective Parishes should
 “ be held and reputed firm and valid;” And, “ That
 “ we would still hold Communion with all and every
 “ one who were affected with the Grievances that we
 “ have been complaining of, and who are in their fe-
 “ veral Spheres wrestling against the same; and that
 “ we were obliged to make a Secession from the pre-
 “ vailing Party in this established Church, who are
 “ carrying on a Course of Defection from our refor-
 “ med and covenanted Principles, &c.” As our Pro-
 testation more fully bears.

There is nothing material in the *Narrative* which we have not considered, except some Reflections on the above Protestations which we entered when the Commission intimate their Sentence unto us; and, since we design to publish our *Reasons* at large for supporting the same, we shall only at this Time make two or three Observes for obviating the Reflections that the *Narrative* makes upon it.

1^{mo}, The Act and Sentence of Assembly 1733, against which we protested, as we have already made evident from the express Words in which it is laid, restrains the Ministers of the Church of Scotland from testifying doctrinally against the Act of Assembly 1732, and the present Proceedings of our Church-judicatories in the violent Settlement of Ministers; and this we look upon as a new and unwarrantable Term of ministerial Communion, and which was not in Being when we were ordained to the Ministry, yea, to be contrary to the Engagements we then came under. And it is affirmed without the least Shadow of Reason in the *Narrative*, p. 53. “ If there had been any Pretence for such an
 “ Allegation (to wit, that a new Term of ministerial
 “ Communion is imposed) it was wholly cut off by the
 “ Proposal made to them by the Committee of the
 “ Commission immediately before the last Sentence was
 “ past, which is above narrated.” But, could the bare Proposal of a Committee of the Commission mend the Matter? Or, could their Proposal make the least Alteration upon what the last Assembly had done?

Likewise, by the Act and Sentence of the Assembly 1733, condemning our Protestation, it is declared to be criminal to enter a Protestation for our just Exoneration, against an unwarrantable Decision of a General Assembly, tho' it has universal Influence on the whole Church: Therefore the Act and Sentence of the last Assembly restrains us from testifying, either doctrinally or by Protestation, against the present unwarrantable Proceedings of our Church-judicatories. As these are both proper and necessary Means for keeping up a standing Testimony against a Current of Defection, so the prevailing Party have now declared, That they will allow none to continue in Ministerial Communion with them, who shall testify, either doctrinally from the Pulpit, or by Protestation in the supreme Judicatory, against their sinful and unwarrantable Proceedings. The Reverend Committee may now see, in Answer unto the Question they put unto us, p. 53. what has fallen out since the Assembly 1732, to render a *Secession* from the prevailing Party more necessary than at that Time.

2do, Tho' we have made a *Secession* from the prevailing Party, who are carrying on the Course of Defection; yet our Protestation bears, that we are willing to hold ministerial Communion with all who are wrestling against the Grievances we have been complaining of: And besides, our *Secession* is not from the Church of *Scotland*; we own her Doctrine contained in her *Confession of Faith*; we observe the received and approved Uniformity in Worship; we adhere unto her Presbyterian Government and Discipline, according unto the Word of God, and our solemn Covenant-engagements; and we have not been convicted of any Thing in our Doctrine or Practice to the contrary: And therefore the *Narraters* have not the least Ground for what they so much question, p. 54. to wit, "Where we will find a visible Church upon Earth, with which we can have ministerial Communion." And as little Reason have they for the Inferences they thereupon form unto themselves,

3tho, We have continued in ministerial Communion with what is reckoned the established Church, till the prevailing Party have declared that they will not allow us any longer ministerial Communion with them: Have they not then forced us out from them? Yet the *Narrators*, in the very Beginning of their Preface, say, "That the four Brethren have forced themselves out of the ministerial Communion of the Church, by their undutiful Behaviour, and obstinate Disobedience, notwithstanding of the utmost Pains used to reclaim them." And all along through their *Narrative* they represent us as the greatest and most obstinate Schismatics: But, do they not verify the old *Scots Proverb*, *They first lay on a severe Stroke, and then they raise the loudest Cry?*

Now, to sum up this whole Affair, the General Assembly did, by their Act 1732, give the Power of Electing and Calling of Ministers to Heritors *as such*; yea, they laid their Act in such Terms, that in a conjunct Meeting of Heritors and Elders, if the Heritors bear the Majority, whether they have their Residence in the Parish or not, whether they are of the Communion of the Church of *Scotland* or not, they may impose a Minister upon a Congregation, tho' all the Elders and People are dissenting and reclaiming: And the reclaiming and dissenting People have no Remedy for them but one, that is, they must libel the Man who is the Heritors Choice, for Error in Doctrine, or something scandalous in Practice; and, if they fail in the Probation, they may lay their Account with the utmost Resentment, not only of their Heritors, but even of the Judicatories of the Church; and they may be sure to have the Heritors Man thrust in upon them, tho' his Gift is nowise adapted to their Capacity, and tho' there is as little in his Walk and Conversation to recommend him unto them.

Likewise, the Judicatories of the Church, in Consequence both of the above Act of Assembly, and also of the *Patronage-Act*, intrude Ministers in all the Corners of the Land, upon Congregations where both El-

ders and People are dissenting and reclaiming; and, if the Presbytery of the Bounds have not Freedom to concur in these violent Measures, a Committee of the Commission is named, and invested with a Presbyterial Power to settle the vacant Congregation.

Mr. *Erskine*, in his Synodical Sermon, judged it his Duty freely and plainly to testify against the above singular Oppression of the Heritage of God through the Land; but the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* having gathered together some Expressions which they alledged to be his, and which they set down in their own Way, did, without finding a particular Relevancy in any one of them, or regarding his Answers unto them, condemn him for emitting the same, and appointed him to be rebuked and admonished at their Bar.

Mr. *Erskine* found himself obliged to flee for Redress of the Unjustice done him to the General Assembly; but the Assembly, instead of supporting him in the Discharge of his Duty, approved what the Synod had done in finding him censurable for some Expressions emitted by him, tending to disquiet the Peace of the Church, and *impugning Acts of Assembly, and the Proceedings of Church-judicatories*; that is, they reckoned it a Disquieting of the Peace of the Church, doctrinally to testify against the Act 1732, and the present unwarrantable Proceedings of the Judicatories in the Settlement of Ministers: Also the Assembly condemned his Answers to the Synod's Charge, and appointed him to be rebuked at their own Bar.

Mr. *Erskine* and other three Ministers judging the above Decision of the Assembly to be an evident Thrust at Ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness, and of a very dangerous Tendency, considering how violent the Current runs at present, and how forward the Judicatories are to intrude Ministers upon Congregations, did protest for their just Right and Privilege to testify upon all proper Occasions against the Act 1732, and the like Defections.

Their Protestation was so much resented by the Assembly, that they appointed their Commission, at their Meeting

Meeting in *August*, to suspend them every one from the Exercise of their Ministry, in Case they did not retract their Protestation, and declare their Sorrow for the same ; as also to proceed to a higher Censure against them at their Meeting in *November*, or any subsequent Meeting, if the Sentence of Suspension was contravened.

The protesting Brethren appeared before the Commission in *August*, and declared they never intended by their Protestation to impugn the Power and Authority of the General Assembly to censure any of the Ministers and Members of this Church upon just and relevant Grounds, or the Exercise of that Power and Authority according to the Word of God, and the known Principles of this Church ; and that their Protestation was their *solemn attested Declaration and Testimony* against what they judged to be an unwarrantable Exercise of Ecclesiastical Power and Authority ; and that, for the Reasons contained in their several *Representations*, they could not retract their Protestation : Yet the Commission suspended them every one from all the Parts of their Ministerial Function, and cited them to their Meeting in *November* thereafter.

The four Brethren, notwithstanding of this Sentence, continued to exercise their Ministry, in regard they looked upon the Suspension to be inflicted upon them by mere Church-authority, seeing they were never convicted of any Thing in Doctrine or Practice contrary to our approved Standards, or their Ordination-vows and Engagements ; and likewise, having protested on these very Grounds, both before and after the Sentence of Suspension was execute, that it should be held and reputed void and null, and that it should be lawful and warrantable for them to exercise their Ministry as if no such Censure had past against them ; they judged, that if they had refrained from the Exercise of their Ministry when discharged, not only by mere Authority, to speak in the *Name of the Lord*, but also for a Testimony that they had given in a Cause of very
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publick Concern, their Obedience in this Case would have been a Departing from their *Testimony*.

When they compared before the Commission in *November*, they plainly owned that they had exercised their Ministry according unto the Protestation they had taken before the Commission at their Meeting in *August*; and thereupon the Commission thought fit to pass a Sentence, loosing their pastoral Relations, and declaring them no longer Ministers of the established Church. This obliged them to protest for the Validity of their pastoral Relations to their respective Congregations, and to declare a Secession from the prevailing Party, who are carrying on a Course of Defection from our *reformed* and *covenanted* Principles, and are suppressing Ministerial Freedom and Faithfulness in testifying against the present Backslidings of this Church, and are inflicting Censures upon Ministers for witnessing by Protestation and otherwise against the same.

If the *Narrative-Writers* or their *Friends* shall think fit to consider the Case as it is now laid before them, and to attack the Reasons that have been offered by the protesting Brethren, both in their *Representations* given in to the *Commission*, and also in this Paper, for vindicating their Conduct, they hope that they shall be able through Divine Assistance to defend the same: But if, instead of Argument, railing Accusations are brought against them, as *Incendiaries*, *Schismatics*, and *guilty of flat Rebellion*, &c. they wont reckon themselves obliged to regard them, but shall leave the *Narrative-Writers* or their *Friends* to boast as they please in their Performances as unanswerable.

The Reverend Committee observe in their *Narrative*, p. 50. " That the Time has been when the Church of Scotland was terrible as an Army with Banners; but that they (to wit, the protesting Brethren) have by their Conduct shown that they have little or no Regard for her." We sincerely wish, that both they and we may seriously consider what it is that is the Strength and Beauty, the Ornament and Excellency, of the Church. Is it not her Holding unto her

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*Head the Lord Jesus Christ ? Is it not her asserting and maintaining the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of his House ? If the Doctrine is corrupted, and no suitable Testimony given against the same ; if the Government is subverted, and if the Discipline is not faithfully and impartially execute ; if the Judicatories of the Church, instead of protecting and supporting, do oppress the Heritage of God ; if they truckle to the Humours and Inclinations of Men, of whatever Rank and Degree they be ; then it is that the Church's Beauty and Excellency, then it is that her Majesty and Strength depart from her : And we desire to pray, That He, who has *the Residue of the Spirit*, may pour out his Spirit upon us ; that he may *turn us again, and cause his Face to shine upon us* ; that he may *heal our Backslidings and Breaches*, that so the Church of Christ in this Land may yet again look forth, *fair as the Morning, clear as the Sun, and terrible as an Army with Banners.**

F I N I S

And the Lord is not far from
and ministering to the poor. We have
and the Lord is not far from
topical, and no man can give
same; it is a gift of the Lord
ciples is not finally and impartially executed; if the
institutions of the Church, instead of protecting and
important to the Church, the Heritage of God, it may
nucleus to the Christian and institutions of men, of
whether Rank and Degree they be; then it is that
the Church's Beauty and Excellency, then it is that
for Manly and Strength does it live; And we
desire to see, that He who has the Kingdom of the Hea-
it may be our own; that we may be able to see that we
again, and only, that we may be able to see that we
in our Faithfulness and Obedience, that to the Church of
Christ in this Land may yet again look forth, as the
Living, that at the day, and visible as an Army of

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